

2016-4

Breakdown: Vol 1: Text and Music, A Survey Of Methodology And Process, Vol 2: In Full Score.

Andrew Synnott
Technological University Dublin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/appadoc>

 Part of the [Composition Commons](#), [Musicology Commons](#), and the [Music Performance Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Synnott, A. (2016) *Breakdown: Vol 1: Text and Music, A Survey Of Methodology And Process, Vol 2: In Full Score*. Doctoral Thesis, Technological University Dublin. doi:10.21427/D7759H

This Theses, Ph.D is brought to you for free and open access by the Applied Arts at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact yvonne.desmond@tudublin.ie, arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, brian.widdis@tudublin.ie.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 License](#)

BREAKDOWN

Text and Music

A survey of methodology and process

PhD

Andrew Synnott, BA mod

Dublin Institute of Technology

Supervisor: Dr Grainne Mulvey

School of Music

Submitted: April 2016

ABSTRACT

The work presented here is in two parts. The first part is an opera composed to a libretto by the Irish playwright, John Breen. This opera is in three acts and concerns the performance of four famous performance art pieces; *Rhythm 0* by Marina Abramović, *Breakdown* by Michael Landy, *Velocity Piece* by Barry La Va and *How To Explain Pictures To a Dead Hare* by Joseph Beuys. These art works are presented as the action of the opera and happen concurrently on the stage during the first two acts. The third act reflects on the action of acts one and two. The artists are forced to defend their work against the skepticism of others and try to explain their motivation for creating art.

The second part contains an exploration of the writing of the opera. The chronology of the opera's composition is discussed. This chronology has some profound effects on the way the final piece is shaped. The shape of the original draft of the text and its transformation into the final version as presented in the libretto of the opera is examined. The inter-dependence of text and music in *Breakdown* is discussed. The influences behind the musical style, texture, leitmotif, harmony, word setting, and rhythm are isolated and given individual attention. Finally, the music's journey from composition to performance is recounted and explained.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of PhD, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the DIT's guidelines for ethics in research.

DIT has permission to keep, lend or copy this thesis in whole or in part, on condition that any such use of the material of the thesis be duly acknowledged.

Signature_____Date_____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who have been of great assistance to me in the writing of the opera *Breakdown*, and the subsequent writing of this document. There is not space here to mention them all, but I would like to mention a few by name, without whom, I could not have done this work. My supervisor Grainne Mulvey has been truly inspirational to me at all stages and has gone above and beyond the call of duty in assisting me. I would also like to thank Kerry Houston and Mark Fitzgerald for all their help and support.

The performance of *Breakdown* in the National Concert Hall on the 20th of January 2015 was very important for me in my development as a composer. It would not have been possible without the assistance and vision of Mairead Hurley, Cliona Doris and Gordon Munro. To all three I offer my sincere gratitude.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks and love to my family—my wife, Vivienne, and my children, Noah and Sky, who made sacrifices to enable me to take this step in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	vi
 CHAPTER 1	
CHRONOLOGY	1
Instrumentation, 8.	
 CHAPTER 2	
THE TEXT	14
Rhyming, 23; Text and Music, 25.	
 CHAPTER 3	
THE MUSIC	31
Texture, 35; Text Setting, 36; Leitmotif, 43; Harmony, 53; Rhythm, 59.	
 CHAPTER 4	
FROM PAGE TO STAGE	62
Preparation for Performance, 63; Casting, 67; Vocal Score, 73 Orchestra, 75.	
 CONCLUSION	78
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	84

APPENDIX 1	85
<i>Breakdown libretto, 1st draft.</i>	
APPENDIX 2	138
<i>Breakdown libretto, final version.</i>	
APPENDIX 3	162
<i>How To Explain Pictures To a Dead Hare, 1st version (music).</i>	
APPENDIX 4	169
<i>Act 1, scene 1 insert.</i>	
APPENDIX 5	173
<i>Act 3 libretto, 2nd draft.</i>	

INTRODUCTION: My Background in Opera

I was educated in Saint Finian's College in Mullingar where I received specialist training in organ and piano. While in school I sung in and accompanied numerous choirs, ranging in size from quartets to choral societies. I also played regularly for services in Mullingar Cathedral. By the time I left school I was very familiar with a large body of standard church repertoire, both for choirs and for solo voice. After leaving school in 1988 I was awarded the position of organ scholar in Saint Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin. While there, I worked with the Palestrina Choir and a large body of the young emerging professional singers who worked intermittently at the Pro-Cathedral singing the solos in Mozart or Haydn masses which were regularly performed in the cathedral's liturgies. It was through this contact with classically trained singers from the Palestrina choir and from the wider singing community that I got my first taste of the operatic repertoire. I would often be asked to coach singers through opera arias simply because I was there and because I was a proficient sight-reader. Hearing trained voices sing some of the most wonderful music ever written left a strong and lasting impression on me. After I left college I started to work for opera companies as a répétiteur, arranger and conductor and I continued working closely with Ireland's leading professional singers as a coach and accompanist. In parallel with this move in the direction of opera my early compositions had a strong bias towards vocal music. Choral pieces and songs are among my better early works. From the start, I enjoyed having text as a primary source for my compositions. This connection between musical ideas and text was soon extended into the theatre. As I began to find my feet, I wrote music for several

theatre productions. This was my first taste of the world of a professional composer. In addition, I wrote music for dance and for radio. All of this music had the external motivation of either text or image.

With this background in composing music to text, coupled with my working knowledge of theatre and my continuing work with singers and opera companies, writing an opera was a natural evolution of my life as a composer and as a musician. Ironically, my first opportunity to write operatic music was not given to me by an opera company. In 2005 Pan Pan Theatre Company commissioned me to write incidental music for their play *Mac-Beth 7*, which was a version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* that included various approaches to staging. *Mac-Beth 7* presented the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* using actors, dancers and opera singers coupled with a sophisticated use of multimedia techniques including live video processing with multiple cameras and screens. The setting constantly shifted—at times the players were in a school, at times in a kitchen and at other times in abstract settings conjured with images projected onto the banks of display screens on stage. The play's director Gavin Quinn in his program notes said this about *Mac-Beth 7*:

We present this piece of theatre as a factory of thought, AN ARMOURY
AGAINST DESPAIR AND DULLNESS.

This statement goes some way to explaining the multi-genre approach Quinn took to the staging of *Mac-Beth 7*—a staging that constantly moves the goalposts for the audience, forcing them to re-engage with Shakespeare's text in exciting and unusual ways as the play progresses.

One of these ways was the setting of text as ‘opera’. For the purposes of the play, it needed to be immediately identifiable as music that could be from an opera. I was not interested in pastiche and so I approached the composition in a way that would go on to form the basis of my compositional approach to *Breakdown*—an approach that takes advantage of the human voice filtered through a standard operatic training and amplifies emotions while following closely the trajectory of the drama. While writing the aria *Glamis Thou Art* from *Mac-Beth* 7 I wanted to recreate in my own way the emotional high points that are present in Puccini’s arias. For example, between figure thirty-three and figure thirty-four in the first act of *La bohème*,¹ the climax of Rodolfo’s aria *Che gelida manina*, the musical high is reached at a point of cadence in the melody (in this case a perfect cadence in the key of E flat) with full orchestral underpinning, accompanied by vigorous movement in the harp, clarinet and flute. Puccini pushes the voice to the extreme of its register (a tenor high C) to maximize the emotional effect. He also gives the voice time to create the most powerful resonance possible by including an *allargando* marking. Performance practice takes this even further with the customary inclusion of a fermata on the high C. There is also a crescendo in the bar leading up to the cadence, further amplifying the point of arrival on E flat. In *Glamis Thou Art* I used similar techniques to achieve a climax at the moment that Lady Macbeth first greets her husband Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor (**Fig.1**).

¹ G. Ricordi, Milan, 1920

Fig.1

molto ritardando

72

Fl.

Cl.

Bsn

Tpt

Timp

L.M'beth

hea - ven peep through the blan - ket of the dark, to cry hold hold

Pno

Vln

Vc.

a tempo, poco sostenuto

11

75

Fl. *ff*

Cl. *ff*

Bsn. *ff*

Tpt. *ff*

Timp.

L.M'beth

Great... Gla - mis wor - thy Caw - dor

Pno *ff*

Vln. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

Db. *ff*

In bar 74 and bar 75 the same conditions exist as in the Puccini. There is a strong cadential gesture in the form of dissonance (bar 74) and resolution (bar 75) at a

melodic climax with the voice set high in the register. There is a crescendo and allargando in bar 74 and there is fast broken chord movement underpinning the full ensemble from bar 75. It was moments like this that immediately conjured up the world of opera while simultaneously serving the original Shakespeare text. *Macbeth 7* showed that my own form of musical expression could serve dark and violent text (like Lady Macbeth's) just as effectively as emotions from the other end of the spectrum and did not seem out of place in the unconventional settings chosen by the director Gavin Quinn. This foreshadows a similar juxtaposition in *Breakdown* where the radical nature of the opera's dramatic content is carried by harmonically and melodically expressive music that can be sung and played without the use of extended techniques which have become commonplace in the music of the 20th and 21st centuries. There is, for example, no speech-singing (sprechgesang) in *Breakdown*. I have learned lessons from great opera composers (like the example discussed above) and applied them to my own work without compromising my own voice.

Irish playwright John Breen saw *Macbeth 7* and thought I would be an appropriate collaborator for his opera project as I could write music that would carry the extremes of his chosen subject matter. When he approached me in 2007, I was immediately enthusiastic about the idea of writing a complete opera. This enthusiasm was tempered slightly by John's idea for the opera's subject matter, which I was not fully behind at the time—I later came to love the opera's twists and turns—but I agreed to work on the project with John almost without a moment's hesitation.

In the following chapters I outline the most important elements in the composition of *Breakdown*. There were many factors influencing the compositional order of the scenes in the opera. In chapter 1 I present these and give the reasons why a simple linear approach was not taken throughout. An understanding of this chronology allows the reader to chart with accuracy the genesis of each idea back to its source within the piece. Important decisions about the orchestration of the music—from thirteen-piece ensemble to full orchestra—are explained and placed in a chronological context.

The text of *Breakdown* was the first element of the opera to be created. The first draft of the work given to me by John Breen was altered and remodeled as the opera's music took shape. The most significant of these alterations are highlighted and explored. *Breakdown* is a unique and compelling work. What makes it unique is the presence of radical and sometimes disturbing drama cloaked in the romanticism of the music. This is not a generalized romanticism, but is extremely specific to the emotional journey in the opera. Where there are highs and lows experienced by the characters I have supplied music that can match their emotions. In chapter 2 I explain how these elements, music and drama, were knitted together using the opening section of the opera's music.

My compositional method, heavily reliant in many places on improvisation at a keyboard, is outlined. Structural elements of the music are isolated and discussed. Texture, text setting, leitmotif, harmony and rhythm in *Breakdown* are analyzed in chapter 3. Explanations are offered for how these important elements of the music's construction contribute to the structure and the feel of the opera.

Finally, in chapter 4 the preparation for the first performance is described, outlining the challenges and pitfalls experienced along the way. The casting is discussed, detailing some minor changes that had to be made to make the parts performable. There were changes too made to orchestral parts. An example of one of these changes is detailed. There is a description of the vocal score, laid out to be playable by two pianos. The importance of vocal scores is discussed and there is a description of how the layout caused problems in rehearsal.

CHAPTER 1: CHRONOLOGY

Any discussion about the composition of *Breakdown* must be prefaced by a detailed analysis of the chronology of its composition. This chronology had an enormous influence on the shape and content of the final piece and so must be explained in detail as a first step in analyzing the opera. The libretto did not arrive as a complete draft, but came, rather, in dribs and drabs over the course of the summer of 2008. The first six pages arrived in May. John was keen to start the opera with an actual reconstruction of a performance art piece, *Imponderabilia* (1977).² This piece would involve having one of the principle singers in the opera, the soprano singing the part of Marina Abramović, standing naked at the door of the auditorium facing a naked man while the audience pushed between them in single file to gain access to the theatre. I immediately discounted it as a viable opening to an opera that I would write. A singer of any standing and ability would be unlikely to accept a part in an opera which involved nudity coupled with exposure to ailments like the common cold, halitosis etc., before the music even begins. The most overwhelming reason I had for discounting it was that I wanted to write an opera that was a successor to the operas I love from the 19th and 20th centuries. Operas by Verdi, Puccini, Strauss, and Stravinsky were the models in my head. I wanted *Breakdown* to maximize the profound relationship existing between music and drama. As a happening that would exist before the music, I could not see a place for *Imponderabilia* in this.

² See appendix 1, 86. The original performance is given a fuller description in *Marina Abramović* by Kristine Stiles, Klaus Biesenbach and Chrissie Iles on p76. This book shows several photographs of the piece, giving some idea how uncomfortable and/or exciting these events can be for the unsuspecting public.

In the draft libretto there follows two long lists. The two people who stand naked at the door to the theatre, Marina and her partner Ulay, voice the first of these lists in John's draft libretto.³ This list refers to their piece, *The Lovers* (1988), in which they walk from opposing ends of the Great Wall of China and meet in the middle to say, 'goodbye' or, in other words end their relationship. The list romanticizes what might be in their heads as they approach each other. They say, 'Walking towards you for a thousand miles to leave you'. As this happens at the entrance to the theatre, in the auditorium John intended us to hear another character, Faith Wilding, singing her poem *Waiting* (list number 2).⁴ The libretto states that, 'the beginning of *Waiting* should be timed so that both pieces end at the same time'. Faith Wilding never appears again as a character in the opera. The first of these two unrelated pieces, *The Lovers*, was disconnected in content from the main thrust of the opera. For the remainder of the opera, we see Marina in the performance of her work, *Rhythm 0*. For the sake of the clarity of her journey as a character in the opera I discounted *The Lovers* as material. Similarly, *Waiting* did not assist the story telling in *Breakdown*. Like *The Lovers* it is disconnected in tone and content from the rest of the opera's action and voiced by a character that never reappears in the opera. In an opera with many characters and multiple stories (as *Breakdown* has), I felt the inclusion of a character who was not involved in any way with the main action of the opera would be too confusing for the audience.

From this point in the draft libretto (page 4 after *Waiting*) things start to become relevant to the completed piece. The stage direction for Barry Le Va given at this

³ Appendix 1, 86–87.

⁴ Faith Wilding (born 1943) is a Paraguayan feminist poet, performer and academic.

point becomes the opening of the opera.⁵ The decision to use this scene as the opening came after the opera was nearly completely written. My original thought had been to write an overture that would include material thematically linked to the rest of the piece. With this in mind, I knew that an overture would be one of the last things I would write and so I felt comfortable leaving it aside. During my initial reading of the draft I felt skeptical about Le Va's *Velocity Piece No. 2* being present in the action, and did not warm to the idea of including the Barry Le Va character *at all* until much later. Eventually I came to see Le Va's running and crashing as a strength and as a possible surprise opening to an opera.

The next part of the draft libretto is a further list. Marina itemizes the objects she will place on the table in her performance space.⁶ Next, the orchestra is instructed to enter and tune ready to play while the fourth list, Michael Landy's possessions for destruction, is being sung by three helpers.⁷ I did not want to formally include the orchestra setting and tuning as part of the spectacle of the opera as it would have erroneously created an expectation that they were somehow part of the *mise-en-scène*. It was immediately obvious to me that the opera proper would start with the list voiced by Landy's three helpers. This list had assets that could benefit the opening of a large-scale piece. It is expository in nature. It introduces three important characters, Landy's helpers, and the task that they are required to do (the listing and destruction of Landy's possessions). I have always been drawn to Puccini's *La bohème*, having in fact arranged the entire opera for chamber ensemble in about the year 2000, and I saw in this interaction a strong parallel with

⁵ Appendix 1, 89.

⁶ Appendix 1, 60–91

⁷ Appendix 1, 92–94

Bohème's opening; three friends in a light-hearted exchange outlining important thematic elements of the piece. I was satisfied and happy that the opera could start here. In the following weeks John continued writing the draft libretto to the end of act 2. Approximately two-thirds of the libretto's first draft was now written.

In spite of the decision to start *Breakdown* with the workers' song, I was intimidated by the list at the beginning of the opera. In the beginning of the writing process, I couldn't find a way to make a list interesting. Because of this, I decided to begin composing using a less challenging section of Breen's libretto. I chose to start with a stand alone number with a strong text, Joseph Beuys's piece at the start of act 2: *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. This, for me, was the perfect place to start. The text was strong because it was colourful, quirky and neatly packaged into shortish units. These units—the description of pictures—allowed me to 'practice' composing by trying to match musical ideas to small sections of text. Furthermore, Beuys had no other part to play in the opera and so *To a Dead Hare* could be composed without a huge commitment in terms of material to the rest of the opera. In other words, if the ideas in it were not strong enough to warrant a place in the rest of the opera's music, I could do it again at a later date without injuring the rest of the piece.

I committed the first notes of *To a Dead Hare* to the screen on the first of April 2008 in Dublin and finished it in Switzerland on 23 June.⁸ It is important to note at this stage that I was composing in short score. *To a Dead Hare* was not orchestrated until much later in the process. The decision to compose in short score was made to

⁸ I spent two months in Switzerland that summer in an Alpine town called Champéry in the Canton Valais. The intention was to go and write a large portion of the opera. By the end of my time there I had written about twenty minutes of music.

facilitate rehearsal, but was to have a major influence on the actual composition of the music. Act 3, in contrast, was composed for full orchestra from the start. Some of the consequences of these different approaches are explored below.⁹

There are two versions of the aria. In the text the pictures described by Joseph Beuys are called ‘slides’. John Breen had intended that in a production of the opera, the pictures being described would be simultaneously projected on a large screen at the back of the stage. The first unfinished version includes Slide 4 (Pope Innocent X by Diego Velázquez (Spanish painter, 1599–1660)).¹⁰ On the 23rd of June I wrote this in my notes about the omission of slide 4 from the final version:

I felt like it would make it too long, plus I felt short of ideas for it. Had originally intended extending the idea for slide 4 into slide 5, working up to a return to slide 2 music for slide 6.

I was worried that the aria would be too long if slide four was included and so I decided to leave it out. I took the opportunity of its omission to remodel the music from bar 67. I had insecurities about the general thrust of the original ideas. I felt they did not flow and that they had to be forced together.¹¹

After the completion of *To a Dead Hare*, I decided to go back to the beginning, the scene with the three Landy helpers, Landy, a couple of Landy Punters, MFP1, MMP1 and MMP2, and continue in a straight line to the end. I started this scene on 24 June and finished it on 27 July 2008. At this stage the scene did not include the

⁹ See chapter 1, 8–13.

¹⁰ Appendix 1, 107.

¹¹ Appendix 3, 162: The score of the first version of *To a Dead Hare*.

exchange between Marina and her assistant.¹² On completing the first scene I planned that for the remainder of the compositional process I would be following the narrative thread and working in a straight line from scene to scene. Scene two turned out to be the most difficult to compose by far. It was the last scene in the opera to be completed in the summer of 2013.¹³

This problem with the composition of act 1 scene 2 motivated a change of approach. I decided to start writing arias and duets instead of whole scenes. I felt that if I had a body of ideas derived from these centrally important moments of the piece, then I would have more to work with as I wrote the scenes. It also meant that I could suggest material from later music and build it into the fabric of the work as a whole. And so it was that I decided to choose these featured moments from the libretto and set them. *To a Dead Hare* and the opening section had already been completed and so the next music to be written was completed in the following order:

She has beautiful eyes (trio at the end of act 1 scene 1)

It was his father's coat (Landy's mother's aria act 2 scene 3)

Her gaze caresses me (Finale of act 1)

My father dug tunnels (Landy's aria act 1 scene 2)

Coupled with the opening of act 1 scene 1 and Joseph Beuys' *Dead Hare* aria, these arias and ensembles contain a significant amount of the opera's important thematic and motivic material. For example, the final cadential gesture in Landy's mother's aria **(Fig.2)** *It was his father's coat* becomes the cadence to Landy's aria *My father*

¹² Act 1, scene 1, bars 123–205

¹³ An attempt to continue with this scene is tagged on to scene one in all of the Sibelius files from that time. It only amounts to a few bars.

*dug tunnels*¹⁴ and, in a greatly extended and enlarged version, becomes the cadence of the entire opera at the end of act 3.¹⁵

Fig.2

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system, starting at measure 44, features a vocal line (L'sM) and a piano accompaniment (Pno.). The vocal line has the lyrics "you are shred-ding him a - gain." The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. The second system, starting at measure 47, continues the vocal line with the lyrics "Shred - ding a good man." and the piano accompaniment with sustained chords.

During this phase of composition, I tackled the opening of the act 1 Finale, intending to set the words of Marina Female Punter 1 from *Her gaze caresses me* to *Soft, yielding, containing, healing* and treat it in the same way as the other featured sections, i.e., as a reservoir for the opera's material. Once I started, I found that I was disinclined to stop at the end of the above section and pushed on to the end of act 1. In my notes I wrote:

9th August 2008

Finished the end of act 1 today. Many things occur to me. The first is the strength of the linear approach to writing. This, of course, might be because

¹⁴ Act 1 scene 2, bars 162–167.

¹⁵ See act 3, bars 507–560.

of the strength of the drama, but I felt under no pressure for ideas while writing this section.

This thought was percolating through my brain as I composed the following two sections—the trio at the end of the first scene, *She has beautiful eyes* and *My father dug tunnels*—and it convinced me that I needed to write linearly from this point on. Most of act 1 had already been written with the exception of scene 2 and so I decided to continue from after the *Dead hare* aria, through act 2, to the end.

Instrumentation

There is a chronology to the orchestration of *Breakdown* that is relevant to my compositional practice and the shaping of the opera as a whole. My original intention was to compose the entire opera in short score (voice and piano) and orchestrate it at a later date. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, as I mentioned above, I always compose at a keyboard. It is the way I have worked since I first wrote music in the mid 1980s and I feel it is a methodology validated by the practice of many great composers through the ages.¹⁶ I thought that I would be able to orchestrate successfully from the piano score without losing anything in the final composition. As I will explain however, this did not prove to be entirely the case. My second reason for composing in short score was the very practical consideration of having a vocal score to rehearse the opera from in the event that it might ever be rehearsed and performed. As alluded to above, there are limitations to this method of composing. Without due care, the orchestra's function can feel only like a colourful piano—the limitations of the composer's hands and technique

¹⁶ Stravinsky, a composer whom I greatly admire, composed at the piano.

casting a shadow over the final piece. At all times while composing I was conscious of this danger and never felt that my short-score versions of the music were close to what I intended the final version to be. For example, take these bars at the beginning of the finale of act 1. The short score version looks like this **(Fig.3)**:

Fig.3

Act 1 Finale

Breen Synnott

Marina Female Punter 1

Piano

MFP1

Pno.

Her gaze car-res - ses

me Lamb of God Vish -

The musical score is for 'Act 1 Finale' by Breen and Synnott. It features three parts: Marina Female Punter 1 (soprano), Piano (piano), and MFP1 (mezzo-soprano). The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The Piano part begins with a piano (p) dynamic. The vocal parts have lyrics: 'Her gaze car-res - ses' for Marina and 'me Lamb of God Vish -' for MFP1. The score shows the first four measures of the piece.

Here we can see crucial elements of the composition: meter, harmony and melody. These bars are completely transformed in the final orchestral version while keeping the three elements of meter, harmony and melody intact **(Fig.4)**.

Fig.4

24 Breen Act 1 Finale Symmott

171 *pp*

Fl.

Cl.

Cl.

Vib.

Hp.

MFP1

Vln. II

pp

Her gaze car - res - ses me

175

Fl.

Cl.

Cl.

Bsn.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Vib.

Hp.

MFP1

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

p

p

p

p

mf

Lamb. of God. Vish - - - - nu.

The clarinets provide a textural backdrop to the music that defines it rather than simply colouring it. There are contrapuntal elements added later to further remove the final version from the piano-bound original.¹⁷ At no time did I feel that the short-score version would be the final version and yet it supplied me with enough information to keep composing without getting bogged down in orchestration.

My first attempts at orchestration were for a 13-piece ensemble:

Flute
2 Clarinets
Bassoon
Horn in F
Trumpet in B flat
Trombone
Percussion
Piano
Violin
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

I decided on this grouping of instruments unwisely. Having little experience composing for full orchestra, I felt more at home with an ensemble not unlike that used in *Mac-Beth* 7. Act 1, scene 1 was completed with these forces¹⁸ and the Finale of act 1 was begun. This instrumentation started to cause problems as soon as I began to orchestrate. A big problem was the lack of a second violin. There were difficulties forming chords with the four strings and there was a lack of divisi

¹⁷ See bars 240–245 of the act 1 finale. The counter-melody added in the trombone part is not present in the original piano version.

¹⁸ The Marina insert had not been discussed at the time of orchestration.

possibilities. This forced me to use the piano more than envisaged. I continued to compose in short score, and only one further scene was orchestrated with these forces (act 2, scene 2) until I began act 3 in September 2011.

Act 3 proved to be a turning point in the composition of *Breakdown*. Unhappy with the results from the 13-piece ensemble I re-cast the opera with a full orchestra. I decided on full orchestra because I felt that the emotional content of the drama needed the power of an orchestra to do it justice. As mentioned above, the opera had been composed largely in short score with various instruments added from time to time to fill in harmonies or moments of contrapuntal interest which could not be conveyed with a single piano part. I decided that the opening of act 3 would be an overture cast in the mold of a grand polyphonic anthem with the melody of *She has beautiful eyes* played as a cantus firmus in the trumpet. For this to work, I needed to compose in full score. This is the way I continued composing for the remainder of the opera. I chose a relatively small orchestra because of potential balance problems between stage and pit:

2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets
2 Bassoons
2 Horns
2 Trumpets
2 Trombones
Timpani
Percussion
Harp
Violins I&II

Violas
Cellos
Basses

There were profound effects on the music resulting from this change in approach. The most significant of these was the contrapuntal richness that was gained.¹⁹ It also opened up the possibility for me to use the colours of the orchestra more appropriately. I could, for instance, use the textural contrast between the strings and winds and brass in a dynamic way.²⁰ Overall I felt entirely liberated by my new *modus operandi* and proceeded to orchestrate the remainder of the opera with a new energy and insight into what was required. The composition of act 1, scene 2 (the last scene to be completed) was also in full score until the aria *My father dug tunnels* which had been written in short score some years earlier. On listening to it now, the transition from full score composition to orchestration of short score in this scene appears seamless.

These are the main issues around chronology of the composition of Breakdown. This chronology is an important context for the opera. There are many strands feeding into the shape of the completed opera, some obvious and some less so. Presenting this context provides an insight into the processes behind the composition of Breakdown as greater detail within the scenes is described. In the following chapter some of the specific decisions around text selection from first draft to libretto are teased out. This shows where text shapes the music and, conversely, where the music shapes our understanding of the text.

¹⁹ For example, act 3, bars 340–372 show a contrapuntal complexity not present in the earlier Acts of the opera.

²⁰ For example, act 3, bars 22–45.

CHAPTER 2: THE TEXT

Breakdown contains a re-enactment of four performance art pieces: *Rhythm 0*, *Breakdown*, *Velocity Piece* and *How To Explain Pictures To A Dead Hare*. The first draft of the libretto, however, also included elements of four other pieces: *Imponderabilia*, *The Lovers*, *Rest Energy* and *Waiting*. These were to happen simultaneously as the audience arrives at the theatre and moves into the auditorium to take their seats.²¹ For the purpose of this discussion I will refer to this as the prologue. These simultaneously experienced fragments of other work create a link from the real world outside the doors of the theatre to the opera's main content, starting with the sounds heard in the foyer to the experience of entering the theatre by passing through the naked bodies in the doorway to the prayer-like text of *Waiting* from the stage. The performance space stretches from foyer to stage, confusing the relationship between audience and performer by including the audience members in the performance as they pass in single file through the two naked bodies at the door of the auditorium. This anticipates the stories of the opera where often the artists are only the catalyst for the drama which takes place in the actions and reactions of the others around them. The depiction of the four art works in the prologue contain only fragments of the original works.

In the first draft these performances act as a buffer to the first of Barry Le Va's actions. *Velocity Piece*, although intended to be seen as separate (there is a fifteen

²¹ Appendix 1, 86. The amplified heartbeats are taken from *Rest Energy* performed by Abramović and her partner Ulay. Together they hold a taut bow and a poised arrow. The weight of their bodies puts tension on the bow. The arrow is pointed at Marina's heart. Small microphones are attached to both their hearts recording the heartbeats.

second blackout in the stage directions before we see Le Va for the first time), is experienced in the context of the prologue.²² Strangeness is of the syntax of the piece thus far and so Le Va and his self-harming seem somehow to belong. Boundries are intentionally blurred. In line with many performance art experiences, it is not clear whether the opera starts when the orchestra start playing or whether it has already started from the first sounds experienced in the foyer of the theatre.²³ My own approach radically changes the opening of *Breakdown*. I placed *Velocity Piece* at the start of the opera, taking advantage of the surprise element that it contains, Le Va's running and the impact with the wall. This provides a stimulating and unexpected opening but frames it clearly behind the proscenium and as part of a more conventional theatrical spectacle than was intended in John's draft. I preferred this clarity as I set John's text and the desire to clarify other elements of the drama led me to make other significant changes in the final version of the libretto.

The first of these changes again concerns the use of *Velocity Piece*. In the first draft John intended Le Va's running and his impact with the walls to be constant through the first two acts of the opera. He imagined that *Velocity Piece* would act like a metronome, the constant movement of which only intruded occasionally on the action but was always visible.²⁴ I preferred to separate this strand of the drama and placed it between scenes, functioning as punctuation, separating scenes within the acts while also allowing Le Va's own physical disintegration to be highlighted, free from the distraction of the other action on stage. I see the physical disintegration of Barry Le Va as a crucial journey for the audience to chart in the first two acts of the opera. The

²² Appendix 1, 91.

²³ Abramović herself says: 'For me it is very important that the public never sees the beginning and the end'.

²⁴ Appendix 1, 89.

trajectory of this disintegration towards final collapse at the end of act two needs to be experienced clearly by the audience so that the collapse itself can take its place at the dramatic climax of the opera with Landy's destruction of the coat and Abramović's brush with death at the hands of MMP2. In the opera, each of these three moments is given a specific place in the music and would ideally be isolated by lighting.²⁵ The intention is to bring each story to its dramatic climax at the end of the second act while making each one stand out. Le Va's place in this triumvirate relies on us seeing his disintegration, understanding what he is trying to do and feeling his final collapse as the logical result of that process. The careful positioning of *Velocity Piece* allows the audience to feel that his collapse at the end of act two is the attainment of his goal.

The second change, which had a profound effect on the structure of the opera, was the treatment of the Abramović character. In the original work of art, *Rhythm 0*, Abramović remained completely passive. She did not move or speak of her own volition for the entire six hours of the performance, but was moved, pushed, carried, scratched, cut and in other ways manipulated by members of the public who attended the event. For the audience to understand what was happening to the Abramović character in the opera it was important that her passivity was clear. In John's draft her character interjects regularly, voicing her internal thoughts.²⁶ These interjections keep Abramović centre stage as the drama of the story unfolds around her but make her passivity within the scene more difficult to read for the audience. In the opera libretto, the drama centres on the characters populating the scene around Abramović. The disadvantage of this approach is that it effectively writes Abramović as a singer out of the opera until the third act. The insert to act 1, scene 1 between Marina and her

²⁵ Act 2 finale, bars 69–80.

²⁶ Appendix 1, 102–103 John's direction in the draft stipulates that these lines should continue over the action until the end of act 1.

assistant was devised and written to mitigate this loss of a voice for Marina as the drama around her unfolds.²⁷ This insert gives her a context and allows us to see something of her humanity before she surrenders her voice to the performance of her art. In act 2 scene 2, Abramović is again given a voice. The draft version of this scene picks up the action at the point of the blackout at the end of act 1. MMP2's text suggests a move to a more symbolic space.

MMP2: In here are dilettantes and spectators, advocates and critics, thinkers and teachers, scribes, painters, academics, soft hands and false smiles, students and administrators with ironic poise and solemn sighs. They validate your lies.

This short scene allowed me the opportunity to reintroduce Abramović as a singing character in the same symbolic space, outside the realism that requires her silence. In order to avoid confusion for the audience I added the chorus to reinforce the idea that Marina is not speaking.²⁸ They repeat the line 'She won't speak' while she and MMP2 sing their internal thoughts. This scene needs to be experienced as suspended reality and would certainly require careful direction and staging to make this intention clear. Another important function is to allow the inclusion of Marina's voice at the dramatic climax of the opera, the finale of act 2 (which uses the same musical material as act 2 scene 2), forming a bridge between the suspended reality of the earlier scene and the real-time danger she faces in the finale. We hear her voice, but understand from the previous scene that she is not speaking.²⁹

²⁷ Act 1, scene 1, bars 123–208.

²⁸ Act 2, scene 2, bars 58–65.

²⁹ Act 2 finale, bars 19–21.

From the chosen opening of the music, the cheery workers song, the libretto follows the text of act 1 of the draft version faithfully and with only minor changes.

Blue woollen hiking socks used and darned.

has been shortened in the libretto to:

Blue woollen hiking socks.

There is occasional reordering of sections of text. The following section of text from the first draft,

This is just a coat. But it was my whole world. It is all I have left of him. When this is gone, it will last forever. That has a price. I will destroy every thing I possess. People will know it. The idea will prevail. His coat will be part of history.

becomes:

This is just a coat, but it is my whole world. When this is gone, it will last forever. This coat will be part of history. This has a price. I will destroy everything I possess. People will know it. The idea will prevail.³⁰

This change places the line, ‘This coat will be part of history’ at the emotional core of the extract and allowed me to place it at the musical climax.³¹ I also felt that the line ‘The idea will prevail’ was a more poetic ending to the aria. One other change here, the change of ‘His’ to ‘This’ in the line ‘This coat will be part of history’, was made to overcome a problem for the singer. Placing ‘Th’ at the start of the sound helps the singer to create the proper pressure behind the note (an F⁴) and assists in the formation of the vowel which is relatively difficult to produce at that pitch.

Alterations to act 2 are more extensive. Act 2 scene 3 of the opera covers a large section of the original draft of act 2.³² It can be broken down into three sections. The

³⁰ Act 1, scene 2, bars 121–151.

³¹ Act 1, scene 2, bars 134–151.

³² Appendix 1, 110–121.

first of these sections is an exchange between Michael Landy and a journalist. In the second section the workers question Landy about his reasons and justifications for his work and in the third his mother joins and tries to stop him destroying any more of his possessions; in particular, a coat that his father had owned. All three sections are linked. Each section contains questions for Landy to answer and also Landy's attempts to answer those questions. Tension is ramped up through the scene. What begins as mild mannered and playful questioning from the journalist becomes more rigorous interrogation from the workers as they try to make sense of all the waste. The final section continues like this but with an extra layer of emotional blackmail thrown into the mix by Landy's mother as she tries to retrieve her husband's coat from her son. This structure was perfect for my purposes in creating a span of the opera's music as it shows us Landy's journey as a single span while allowing for textural contrast in the three different scenarios within the scene. In the original draft however there are several factors that weaken the structural cogency of this scene. The first and most significant of these factors is Marina's interjection just after Landy's mother enters.³³ Dramatically, this entrance is a pivotal point in the scene. It would be considerably weakened by an interjection from Marina so I have omitted it in the final version. This omission allows the dramatic crescendo to continue uninterrupted through this point to the end of the scene. The second factor is one of tone. The tone of the first draft version I received from John mixes naturalistic dialogue with more poetic language. After act 2, scene 2 with its suspension of reality, I wanted a contrast of tone that was clear for the audience. I decided to limit the poetic content and keep the exchanges closer to natural conversation. For example, in the original draft, Landy speaking to his helpers about how his work is received, states:

³³ Appendix 1, 114.

Nothing I can imagine will awake a jaded mind. Are we to become a shamen, generators of secular rituals for a world without gods?

This has been omitted. The scene as it appears in the opera gives a more belligerent picture of Landy and make him less intellectually engaged with his process than in the draft. I prefer this because within the context of the story it makes him seem more real to me. His reactions to questioning from his payed workers is an emotional reaction—impatience—and as such feels more natural in the drama of the moment.³⁴

The greatest omissions from act two, the extensive monologues from the three artists before the text corresponding to the beginning of the act 2 finale, were made for the same reason—to concentrate on the forward impetus of the action and to propel us more quickly to the dramatic climax of the opera at the very end of act 2.³⁵ The ommitted content is in part recycled in the finale. John had intended that Le Va would find his voice for the first time at this moment and so I have imbedded some of his monologue into the fabric of the finale.

The genesis of the third act was by far the most troubled as we sought to create a cohesive dramatic structure for the opera. After I read the draft version of the third act I felt it did not have the dramatic strength of the first two acts. It felt to me like an anti-climax. I shared my concerns with John and added that I favoured an ending that would allow for all of the voices heard during the opera to be singing at the end. I suggested to him that because the drama of the piece was less intense at the end of act 3 than at the end of the previous two acts, it would benefit from the textural excitement of the massed voices of the full company singing during the

³⁴ Act 2, scene 3, bars 189–215

³⁵ Appendix 1, 122–123.

closing moments of the opera. Further to this we discussed the possibility of including Beuys in the opera's conclusion. I felt that Beuys had the potential to be a focal point for the work of all the artists. John agreed and responded with a new draft for act 3.³⁶ This draft did not include an ending for the opera. John's email at the time of writing stated:

The last section will feature the three artists and Joseph Beuys and the chorus probably all singing together but I need to do a little research before I get into it.

The last section was sent to me on the 30th March 2012.³⁷ In this new ending Joseph Beuys sings:

It cannot rest. It is life. Breathing and not breathing. Being or not being. One is not part of the other. It cannot rest. If it rests it is not. I am not. What am I if not this?

This utterance from Beuys beautifully and poetically captures the idea that art as an impulse comes from deep within the artist and that as artists our art is an essential part of who we are. This is a feeling that rings true in my own life. In order to be ourselves we have to create. In the words of Beuys, 'It cannot rest'.

In spite of the inclusion of Joseph Beuys, I still had misgivings about this new ending. It struck me as lacking finality and it also missed the opportunity to include all of the performers at the end. It did contain very strong material however and I

³⁶ Appendix 5, 174–178.

³⁷ Appendix 5, 179–180.

saw a way to finish the opera using some of it with the addition of a repeated line sung by the chorus: 'It's time to go'. With John's permission I fashioned this ending from parts of his material plus that one line for the chorus and finished the opera. If you compare John's ending from March 2012 to the ending in the final libretto it is clear that the final version deviates significantly from John's original idea. I subjected the original to reordering and cutting (approximately two thirds of the text is cut from the final version) to facilitate an ending which included all of the singers and which simplified the final message of the opera to Joseph Beuys' statement in support of artistic endeavor: 'It cannot rest'.

In the first two acts I made attempts to limit the symbolic/poetic content of the text in order that the stories could unfold with pace and momentum. It was always going to be the case after the high drama of the act 2 finale that the third act would need a different approach. It seemed completely natural to me that this approach could indeed move the artists into a more symbolic realm. In response to interrogation from the assembled characters in the opera we get no clear and definitive answer to the question: 'Why did you do it?'. We are however brought on a journey into the minds and motivations of the artists through symbol and metaphor:

Marina: I am nothing here. Out there, waves of ideas radiating. I am reaching out.

As the third act progresses and the artists move more and more into this symbolic space the music does the same, calming down and becoming more stable

harmonically and motivically.³⁸ It seemed right to us that an opera with art as its subject matter should deal with the questions it throws up. There are of course no definitive answers proffered by the text of *Breakdown*, but there is a case made for art as one of our fundamental impulses as human beings.

Rhyming

When I first spoke to John about the writing of *Breakdown* we discussed the style of writing that would best suit the opera's music. I expressed a preference for a prose style. In general, a prose style is how John chose to set the text. There are some exceptions, including the worker's song near the start of the draft version. The changes between draft and libretto in this opening workers' song are subtle. The primary text is preserved throughout with only five lines excluded. The excluded text is:

Paperback fiction, rubber plants

A plastic warren to house his ants

Panty hose and shoe polish

Frozen peas and chutney relish

Plastic soldiers and video disks

This text provides a clear picture of what is lost in the final version of the libretto. The original has a rhyming structure that develops as the lines unfold. The libretto, while maintaining the rhymes as part of the structure of the music, does not attempt to

³⁸ Act 3, bars 482–437

highlight the rhymes with corresponding symmetry in the music. This imbues the listing of objects with a ‘live action’ feel. The omitted section of text contains the most overt rhyming in this opening song. Of course there is still rhyming structure in the libretto, and it is audible, but it does not play a part in shaping the musical structure. While setting this text I treated it as though it did not include a rhyming structure. I did this so that I could compose the music free from the need to highlight the rhymes in the text. The word ‘mac’ for instance sung by LW3 in bar 42 of act one, scene one, rhymes with the word ‘sack’ in bar 52. If the rhyme was my priority I could have placed it in a stronger rhythmic position, perhaps at the beginning of the following bar. Its position on the last quaver of the bar and the short duration of the note obscures the rhyme somewhat. In the early stages of composition I wanted the vocal lines and text setting to remain consistent from scene to scene. I had already written the Joseph Beuys aria *How To Explain Pictures To A Dead Hare* and was using that as a loose template for how I approached the text setting in the first scene. There are very few examples of rhyming elsewhere in the draft version. Where there is, I omit the rhyming text completely like in this example near the end of act 2:

Workers: Destroy the coat!
Shred it.
Grind it to dust
And bury it.
Take off your overalls
And your jockey shorts or smalls
Remove any jewelery
And place it on the tray
It will be returned to you
In a different way.

From this section of text I have kept only the line ‘Destroy the coat’ which has been repositioned to the finale of act 2.³⁹

As stated before, the chosen starting point for the opera is the *Everything must go* song.⁴⁰ It is (in the words of the librettist) a ‘cheery workers song’. My plan was to create an opening scene that would draw the audience straight into the opera’s story. Doing this requires text and music to be working in tandem, neither one pulling the other back, or pushing the other where it does not want to go. There is a symbiosis existing between text and music in opera that needs to be present if the drama of each moment is to be maximized.

Text and Music

The exuberance of the workers is characterized in the music from the opening bars in 5/8 time (**fig 5**):

³⁹ Act 2 finale, bars 17–20.

⁴⁰ Appendix 1 92.

Fig. 5

This example also contains the workers’ refrain, ‘Everything must go.’ Reading the original draft, it was clear that this was a strong feature of the text. A refrain would add to the song-like character of the opening. The libretto maintains the use of these words but adds two more iterations and repositions two others. The first difference between draft and libretto is in bars 13–16.⁴¹ Here the workers sing a repeat of the refrain. This addition of an extra refrain has several functions. It creates a musical platform for the list of objects (bars 17–26). From the opening, our ears understand this refrain to be ‘kicking off’ rather than ‘rounding off’ music. It is consequently an ideal starting point from where to begin the list. The strength of its forward momentum allows the harmony to stay static from bars 11–24, carrying us through the material and textural change underpinning the list (**Fig. 6**):

⁴¹ For the purpose of this discussion, ‘libretto’ refers to the actual text in the final version of the opera and ‘draft’ refers to the text as supplied to me by John Breen.

Fig. 6

20

Air - fix mo - dels spit - fires

Shirts from ox - fam

go

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

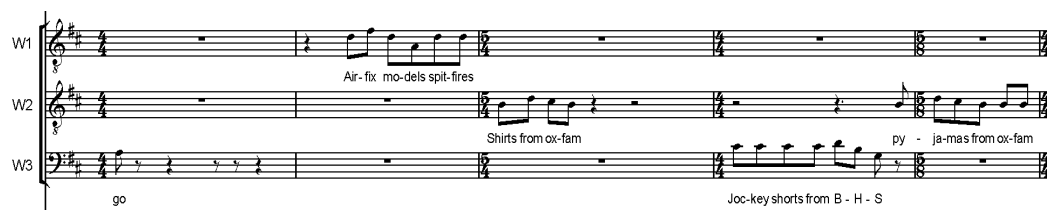
pizz.

There follows an example of the ability of music to shape meaning in text. Another change to the first draft is made in bars 25–26. ‘*A Saab 911*’, moved from its original position, is placed as the climactic point of this first group of items to be destroyed. Its position as the climax is signaled by the tutti orchestral sound, the rhythmic change, the register of the voice, and (as a counterbalance for the static harmony), a change of chord that operates as a strong dominant requiring resolution back to a tonic. In the first draft, the Saab 911 is just another item, but in the opera it has an

enhanced meaning. The workers all sing about this item in rhythmic unison. It feels like they are asking ‘can he really be destroying a Saab?’ but with a sense of fun and excitement. The music has given Landy’s items a hierarchy, and so it is no longer simply a list.

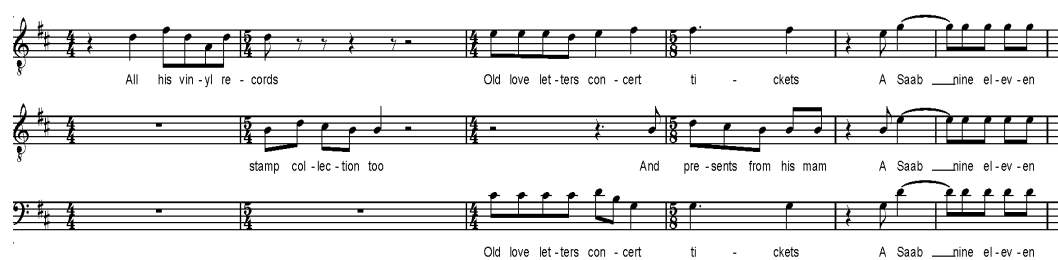
In the draft version, all three singers sing the opening song. In the opera, the song is divided among the three, thereby bringing its meaning into relief and creating texture (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7



Even without hearing it, you can see in the *Saab 911* moment how this has a profound effect on the structure and the feel of this song. The positioning of the voices within the phrase, the overlapping of voices and finally the moment of rhythmic unison give shape to the workers’ list (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8



The resolution of the 'dominant' over the next few bars back to the 'tonic' of the opening is reinforced by the next text change in the libretto. The music falls back onto the opening material and the refrain is sung once more. Because it is the third time it has been heard, it has a stronger effect. It is from this position of strength that the music starts to turn away from the harmonic and thematic centres established earlier. This mirrors changes in the text, which for the first time transforms from the mere listing of possessions to a commentary on what is happening:

All that he has and all that he is, we'll grind to dust in a sack. He'll be left
with nothing, standing naked on the floor. We get eight fifty an hour. Could a
student ask for more?

This text and its setting within the music reinforce the single-mindedness of the three workers. They are individuals of course and this is emphasized later in the scene when they argue about the rights and wrongs of what Landy is doing, but they are happy to be doing what they are doing. This togetherness is realized musically as they sing in rhythmic and melodic unison for the first time (previous unisons have been rhythmic only), "Could a student ask for more?" It is clear from what they sing and the strong positioning of the text in the music that the workers are in it for the money almost exclusively and they have yet to be drawn into the unfolding drama of the piece.

The final two changes to the original text in the libretto help facilitate the ending of the worker's song. The refrain is repositioned to bar 62. This time it is given several extra characteristics that expand its function. The workers sing it together now with a new music that is more emphatic in character and more exuberant. The expository

nature of the refrain is amplified by the harmonic changes that constitute a move to a new, unstable tonal centre at bar 74. This extended chord sequence pulls towards a final cadence and as such gives the last list of objects a strong impetus. This list is shorter than in the original draft while still containing nineteen new objects. The length of the list adds to the feel of cadence but requires the impetus of the harmonic progression to keep it alive until the last 'Everything must go.'

John has created a unique piece of theatre in *Breakdown*. There are many characters moving in and out of focus as the dramas of each of the art works unfold. None of the artists are fully fleshed out and we get only glimpses of what these people might be like in real life. Abramović and Landy are the most complete characters on the stage while Beuys and Le Va are arguably the least complete of any of the characters and exist only in the world they have created through their art. Abramović gives us some idea why she engages in this extreme form of self-expression—the abusive relationship with her mother—and our understanding of Landy's character is informed by the tragic loss of his father and the difficulty he is experiencing with his mother as he tries to destroy his possessions. Other characters like MMP1 and 2 and Landy's helpers have emotional journeys too, but only within the confines of the art they are experiencing. The real stars of *Breakdown* are the works of art being depicted. *Rhythm 0*, *Breakdown*, *Velocity Piece* and *Explaining Pictures To A Dead Hare* are works of startling originality that continue to influence artists today.⁴² In John's realization, the startling drama of the first performances of these works is successfully translated to the stage in the first two acts and the third act leads the audience through a reflection on this art and the artists who created it.

⁴² For example, Abramović herself, in an homage to iconic performance art pieces entitles *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005) recreated *How To Explain Pictures To a Dead Hare*. Irish performance artist Amanda Coogan made her own homage with her work: *Explaining the sea to an uneaten potato* (2008).

CHAPTER 3: THE MUSIC

My compositional method for *Breakdown* followed my usual practice when composing music to text. I am a skilled improviser, having improvised for years on the organ at church services. I have always improvised too on the piano and it is my practice to begin composing by improvising at the piano with the text as a guide to mood or impulse. When successful, these improvisations can yield various results. As I play I look out for chords that I like, harmonic progressions that work well, rhythmic/motivic cells, possible climactic moments that the music can build towards and melodies. Indeed, anything that catches my ear is investigated. I keep a pencil and manuscript beside me so that I can write any material down as I go along.

Examples of improvised material which makes it into the completed piece are everywhere in *Breakdown*. For example, the first five bars of **Q** in act 1, sc 1 (**Fig.9**). The improvised material (cell) is in bars 3 and 4 in this example, played by the harp, flutes and clarinet:

Fig.9

238

rit. **Q** ♩=50 Lento e molto cantabile molto rit. ♩=50 a tempo

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. 1

Bsn. 2

Glock.

Hp.

MFP1

W1

W3

LP2

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

She has beau ti-ful eyes.

Saint Fran- cis?

done.

Has it?

p *pp* *f* *ppp* *p* *pp*

In this example, the post improvisation compositional process can be seen beginning in the strings in bars 4 and 5 of **Q**. The original cell is answered here by the strings which serve the added function of filling in the space in register created between the low A in bar 3 and the flute/clarinet figure. Bars 1 and 2 were added later as an intro to the material. From this improvised cell the remainder of the first

scene is fashioned painstakingly, bar by bar. This work takes place at the computer. I use a full-sized piano keyboard and Sibelius software. I never compose away from a keyboard because the level of harmonic detail that I can achieve diminishes when I cannot hear exactly what is happening.

A different type of material that was found during improvisation is the short rhythmic cell at the start of act 2, scene 2 (**Fig.10**).

Fig.10

The musical score for Act 2, Scene 2, is written in 8/8 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Vivo' with a quarter note equal to 135 beats per minute. The score includes parts for Bass Clarinet in B-flat, Bassoon 1, Bassoon 2, Horn 1 in F, Horn 2 in F, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, MMP2, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The bassoon parts and the bass clarinet part feature a rhythmic cell consisting of a quarter note followed by an eighth note, which is repeated throughout the scene. The Viola part has lyrics: 'I will slit you witch is that O- K? who will stop me? Who will stop me'. The score is marked with dynamics such as *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte).

The improvised cell in this example is a single bar repeated in the low strings bassoons and bass clarinet. This rhythmic ostinato proved to be a particularly fecund basis for the subsequent compositional process. It could be easily adapted through transposition (see bar 31) and elongation (see bars 174 and 175) and could

support a wide variety of other materials superimposed on it. Another feature of this ostinato is its harmonic stability. It relies for its strength on a slow harmonic rhythm. This relative lack of harmonic movement speeded up the compositional process. Because I did not have to spend time finding suitable harmonic progressions and because there was an expectation of motivic repetition set up from the opening of the scene I was able to navigate my way from moment to moment easily. The whole scene was written in five days. By contrast, the following scene, act 2, scene 3 took three months to write. Act 2, scene 3 does not use techniques like ostinato and is much more detailed harmonically and motivically. Each change of chord was found by the labour intensive method of trial and error. These two scenes have a very different effect on the listener. The material in scene 2 is violent and brutal in nature and only deals with a single interaction—between Marina and MMP2. The insistence of the ostinato works well to compliment the violence of the scene unfolding on the stage. Scene 3 functions differently. There are three distinct mini scenes within the scene. In the first, a journalist interviews Landy about the effect *Breakdown* is having on his life. Landy's three helpers then questioning him as to his motives for destroying everything he owns. Finally, Landy's mother enters and tries to stop him from destroying his father's coat. The music required for these three different scenes-within-a-scene needed to reflect the emotional and thematic complexity of the text. This complexity led to music of greater harmonic and motivic complexity being written to carry it. The complexity resulted in a greater number of decisions being made, not only about harmony (as referred to above), but also about the thematic material that would best carry the meaning of the scenes.

There are examples of music in *Breakdown* not derived from improvisation. The standout example of this is the opening of act 3. In act 1 and act 2, Landy, Abramović and Le Va inhabit different spaces on stage. In act 3, however, all of the action needs to happen in a single space. This needs time to be achieved either through a change of set or, at the very least, the repositioning of the singers into a single part of the stage. The opening of act 3 was written to facilitate this change. I decided to write a chorale prelude with the melody from act 1, scene 1 “She has beautiful eyes” as the chorale tune. The elements of this music were chosen without reference to the usual resource of improvisation. The style of this music is contrapuntal and imitative in the way a renaissance motet by Palestrina might be. The main motif used is derived from the chorale tune. The value of writing at a computer is at its greatest to me in music like this. Where two hands at a piano cannot accurately represent the music as intended, the playback facility on the computer is invaluable for checking each moment in the music as it passes. These moments can be interrogated further by slowing the tempo down so that every harmonic detail can be heard clearly.

Texture

Texture is another important element of my composition. I eschew complexity that obscures any detail in the music. I try to ensure that the elements that make up each moment as it passes are all audible and important to the experience of the listener. There is often a motor supplying the momentum and feel. Bar 193 in the act 1 finale demonstrates this. Here the pizzicato strings are the engine of the music with assistance from the clarinets and bassoon. The flute and first violins share the main

thematic content, an agitated quasi melody, and the brass join to move the music towards cadence with the strong sense of contrary motion against the general direction of that melody. There is nothing muddying the waters here. All elements are audible and the function of each is clear. When the full orchestra is playing together in the opera, there are various approaches used to maintain the same clarity of function for all elements operating in the music. At the end of the act 2 finale where three stories reach their climax the brass are omitted from the orchestration until, dovetailing with the end of the singing, they add the sonic heft to match the dramatic weight of the moment. This gives the voices a chance to be heard while ensuring that the impact of the full orchestra is felt. Where there is a multiplicity of lines competing to be heard I often slow the harmonic rhythm down to keep the counterpoint clear.⁴³

Text Setting

An important part of the style of *Breakdown* is my approach to text setting. An unbreakable rule for me is that the vocal line should follow the same stress pattern as the spoken word. This is common practice among composers but there are notable and high profile exceptions in the world of opera. Stravinsky for instance does not limit himself to the speech stress patterns of the words when he sets the vocal line. In Oedipus' first entrance in *Oedipus Rex* (**Fig.11**) Stravinsky creates musical effect by playing with the stresses in the vocal line. In this example he adds accents in the middle of syllables (bars 2 and 4), he takes the stress off the strong syllables in words ('liberabo' in bar 4) and he obscures the natural flow of the spoken phrase with pointedly unusual word repetitions ('vos' in bars 5, 6 and 7).

⁴³ Act 1, scene 2 bars 134–142 and act 3 bars 175–182

Fig.11

OEDIPE

16

Li - - be - ri, vos li - be - ra - bo,

5

Li - be - ra - bo, vos, vos, vos a - pes - te.

Stravinsky in *Oedipus Rex* has chosen to obscure the meaning of his primary text even further by choosing Latin as the language of his characters and allowing the sense of the drama to reside in the utterances of Le Speaker. In *Breakdown* I have chosen the opposite path. At all times I have taken steps to make the text as intelligible as possible. As I have said, the stress patterns are always, without exception, in line with the spoken stresses of the words. Words are repeated only if they are important enough to warrant highlighting. For example, Landy repeats the words ‘This coat’ (bars 134–139 act 1, scene 2) so that the importance of the coat is imprinted more clearly on the audience. When text is obscured in ensembles, repetition is sometimes used to make sure that a character’s important points are audible. An example of this can be seen in act 2, scene 3. Landy’s mother sings ‘My husband died, that was his coat’ in bars 211 and 212 as part of her heated exchange with her son. The words are inaudible here because of the extreme range of the vocal line, the loud orchestral accompaniment and Landy’s voice obscuring them. The argument and the emotion of each character at this moment supersede the importance of hearing the text clearly. The meaning here is important though, and so I have repeated her text in bars 214–215 in a register and at a volume that makes the meaning completely clear. My approach to the stress patterns is constant throughout

the music but the speed at which the words are delivered varies enormously from scene to scene. There is recitative-like delivery in act 1, scene 1 as the Landy workers explain what they are doing and how they feel about it.⁴⁴ Here the rhythm is written mimicking spoken rhythm. Where the content is more personal and/or more emotional, the pace of delivery of the words slows down (**Fig.12**).

⁴⁴ Act 1, scene 1 bars 84–110

Fig.12

235

Fl. 1 *p*

Fl. 2 *p*

Ob. 1 *p*

Cl. 1 *p*

Cl. 2 *legato mf*

Bs. 1 *legato mf*

Bs. 2 *mf*

Hr. 1 *pp*

Hr. 2 *pp*

Hp.

ther *angrily*
 smell of it. The smell of it Be-fore

Vkrs
 fa - ther's coat Look at her this is - n't right

Lan.
 won't get paid get back to work get back to work I have to de-stroy the coat I have to de - stroy the coat

Ln. I *simile*

n. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

In this example, Landy's mother and the workers focus on the significance of the coat and the vocal lines reflect the quality of the moment with very slow delivery of text. The effect is amplified by melisma in the mother's line. This is in stark contrast to Landy's attempts to disengage the workers from his mother and to emphasize the need to destroy the coat. When the text becomes more symbolic in act three this process is stretched even further.⁴⁵ Melisma, like in the example above, is not used very often in *Breakdown*. When it is used, it emphasizes particular words and/or adds a layer of vocal beauty to a moment.⁴⁶ One of the greatest achievements of the music is its success in straddling the extreme emotions of the drama. The text was at all times of primary importance. The music written to carry the drama adapts, sometimes within a very short space of time, as the various stories of the opera's plot juxtapose scenes at opposite ends of the emotional spectrum. An example of this juxtaposition can be easily seen at the end of act 1 and the beginning of act 2. At the end of act 1 the full orchestra paints the brutality of MMP2 with rhythm and harmony reflecting his violence as he takes the knife and sings the words, 'I'll cut your face' (**Fig.13**).

⁴⁵ See act 3, bars 278–335

⁴⁶ For example, act 2, scene 2 bars 111–112

Fig.13

a tempo mosso (♩=150) blackout
End of act 1 57

386

Picc. *ff*

Fl. *ff*

Ob. *ff*

Ob. *ff*

Cl. *ff*

Cl. *ff*

Bsn. *ff*

Bsn. *ff*

Hn. *sf*

Hn. *sf*

Tpt. *sf*

Tpt. *sf*

Tbn. *sf*

B. Tbn. *sf*

Timp. *sf*

B. D. *ff*

S. D. *sf*

MMP2 *face*

Vln. I *fff*

Vln. II *fff*

Vla. *fff*

Vc. *fff*

Ch. *fff*

Immediately after this moment, at the start of act 2, Joseph Beuys describes pictures to a dead hare with delicate orchestral accompaniment and harmonies that create an open, warmhearted effect. Here the harmony is very suggestive of a D major modality (Fig.14) unlike in Fig.13 where there is an augmented harmony with added cluster notes to heighten the dramatic dissonance of MMP2's violent intent.

Fig.14

To A Dead Hare

John Breen Andrew Symmott

$\text{♩} = 72$

A pic-ture rep-re-sents some-thing in the world. We see some-thing in this world and we

try to re-cre-ate it with-in a frame. This frame is a rec-tangle It mea-sures eight feet by four feet

These are hu-man feet. your feet are smal-ler so it would ap-pear lar-ger to you

$\text{♩} = 55$

It was made by a man named Jack-son poll-ock from A - me - ri - ca

Leitmotif

A major consideration when writing a work that is long in duration is how to keep it coherent. In the case of opera, the range of structural objects and mechanisms involved in building a cohesive structure stretches beyond music into the theatre. Therefore, the understanding of its structure, or lack thereof, is extended to practitioners in the complementary yet sometimes entirely unmusical fields related to staging an opera (lighting, costume, makeup, stage direction, etc.). ‘Understanding’ (at whatever level; instinctive or conscious) is a key component in successful performance, and yet how can a composer expect musicians and non-musicians alike, working to realize his/her particular vision and then during performance the audience, to ‘understand’ the music drama (opera) in the same way that he/she understands it? To explore this, I will focus on one element of the musical structure that operates on the surface of Breakdown’s music and near the surface of the psychodrama that it carries, namely leitmotif. Leitmotif is a device that is used on the surface of my musical argument. It is something that all should be able to understand and establish connections with, and is readily accessible to both opera practitioner and audience as a signifier in the music.

Leitmotif is a term coined by Friedrich Wilhelm Jähns⁴⁷ meaning leading or guiding motif, and is used to denote a short musical figure identifying a person, thing, event, or idea in music and above all in opera.⁴⁸ It finds its most celebrated expression in the operatic music of Richard Wagner, and particularly in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The

⁴⁷ Jähns (born Berlin, 1809; died there, 1888) was a scholar—particularly of the works of Weber—singing teacher and composer.

⁴⁸ Warrack, J.H. and West, E., 1992. *The Oxford dictionary of opera*. Oxford University Press, USA. 401.

Ring of the Nibelung). Within the *Ring*, the device, present from the start, evolves through the course of the four operas into a multilayered and labyrinthine network of connections, reminiscences, and signifiers that could exist in a single opera only or could evolve and change during the course of the whole cycle.⁴⁹ It is important to keep in mind that, in opera, not only does music have a dynamic effect on the drama, but also the same dynamic force operates in reverse. The drama changes how we hear and perceive the music or more specifically in the context of leitmotif, the associations with any particular motif (especially in a piece of such extreme duration as the *Ring*) will deepen and gain complexity as the drama unfolds.

This mechanism is at work in *Breakdown*. In spite of its relatively short duration of one hour and twenty minutes (the *Ring* has around 16 hours of music) the leitmotifs fulfill several functions that add to the coherence of the music as a single unit. I make a distinction between thematic material that is used to bind a section of the opera's music together and what I have termed, for the purpose of this discussion, as leitmotif, i.e. a motif that has structural significance beyond its immediate musical context and appears in at least two sections of the opera's music.⁵⁰ I have named all of the leitmotifs in *Breakdown* for the sake of this discussion. The first leitmotif I call *Grinding*. It first appears in the opening bars of the piece and is a rhythmic figure with a characteristic harmony of an open fifth with added ninth and sixth (**Fig. 15**). This music underscores Landy's helpers as they enter at the start of the opera. The motif repeats often in this section of the music and therefore is strongly associated with the scene and the grinding apparatus represented on stage.

⁴⁹ Millington, B., 1984. *The Master Musicians: Wagner*. London: Dent & Sons Ltd.

⁵⁰ The opera is clearly divided into sections in line with the dramatic structure. Act 1 scene 1, act 1 scene 2, and so on. Act 3 is a single section, again in line with the dramatic structure.

Fig. 15



This grinding motif only appears in two other places in the opera: act 2, scene 3 and in act 3, as the action of the opera turns toward its conclusion. Both times the motif's function is one of reminiscence. In act 2, scene 3 Landy sings, 'I'll grind him up with everything else' as he jokes with the journalist about his cat Rats. The grinding motif amplifies the joke as we recall the motif's original context in the opening scene of the opera during which Landy's possessions are itemized and ground to dust in a machine. In act 3 the reminiscence lingers for a slightly longer time and is imbued with the sadness of Landy's loss. He sings, 'They were only things', but we know from watching his story unfold that they were not 'only things', but were objects filled with significance and memory. This is particularly true of the coat his father had given him and that his mother was so desperate to retrieve from him. The presence of the grinding motif in this instance reminds the audience not of the grinding, but of the scale and finality of Landy's loss. The opera's story has taken this motif on its own journey. Over *Grinding* the workers sing 'It's time to go'. It is clear that there is no going back for Landy. His life must restart from now, piece by piece and possession by possession.

The opening of act 1, scene 1 provides the second motif, *Landy's List* (Fig. 16).

16

B

Fl. 1

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

W1

W2

W3

go

Air - fix mo-dels spit-fires

Shirts from ox-fam

B

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

Db.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

p

p

p

46

journalist in act 2, scene 3. It then morphs to become the accompaniment to their lighthearted exchange.

Act 1 scene 1 contains one further motif, connected with the artist Marina Abramović. I have named it *Marina's Beauty*. It is given this name because it first appears when Marina Female Punter 1 sings these words at the end of the opera's first scene:

She has beautiful eyes.
I don't think that she can see me.
Can you see me?
Can you hear me?
She has beautiful eyes!

This is an important moment in the opera where our attention is drawn to Marina Abramović—the person and not the artist. The audience can never lose sight of Marina's humanity even though the male 'Marina Punters' do, to the point where they can harm or even kill her. This motif is positioned strongly and clearly in the musical and dramatic structure to reinforce this connection. The motif is not heard again until the orchestral introduction to the third act. Here the melody is augmented and used as a *cantus firmus* over the polyphonic texture of this music. In a veiled yet audible way it signals a shift in emphasis from the real time danger of the act 2 Finale, to a more spiritual state, where ideas take precedence over action. Its final sounding is in bar 406 of act 3. The solo violin takes the melody (in its original key—D major) gently underscored by muted strings. On stage the assembled people start to help each of the performers recover from their ordeals in a moment of empathic humanity. The presence of *Marina's Beauty* (**Fig. 17**) reinforces the humanity of the moment but also has the effect of resolution (in a musical sense) as things come full circle from

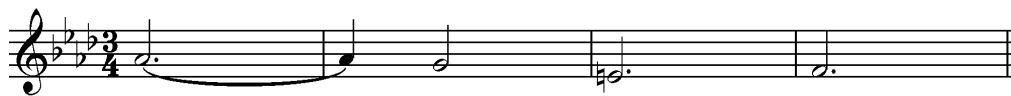
act 1 through the violence and breakdown of the subsequent action to this moment of kindness. After ‘breakdown’, the group rebuilds itself into a kinder and more socially responsible unit, capable of caring for itself and for the individuals within it.

Fig. 17



In act 1 scene 2 the focus of the drama is switched entirely to Michael Landy’s space. The material in this scene is transformed from the lighthearted exchanges of the opening scene to a more in-depth discussion dealing with the difficulties faced by Landy as he executes his vision. *Landy’s Struggle* (**Fig. 18**) is the motif underpinning this mood shift.

Fig. 18



It weaves in and out of the scene and the aria that follows it, underlining that there is pain contained for Landy in his actions. For example, from bar 97 to bar 105 Landy sings:

I felt like a prince.
I felt invulnerable.

This memory of the positive power of his father's presence is immediately followed by the *Landy's Struggle* motif tempering the strength of the music with the sadness of loss (bars 106–109). The power of this motif to take us directly to the core difficulty for Landy in what he is doing is clearly audible in act 2 scene 3. During Landy's exchange with the journalist he says:

Every now and then a twinge,
A memory.

Over these lines *Landy's Struggle* is played (for added poignancy) on the muted trumpet. Again, when the journalist mockingly suggests that Landy's girlfriend might not want him after he has destroyed everything, we hear *Landy's Struggle* sounded twice in close succession. The second iteration is embellished⁵¹ to add emphasis to Landy's painful realization that life can never be the same again for a man who has destroyed everything he owns. In act 3 the scope of this motif expands. It becomes more generally associated with the difficulties experienced by all of the artists as they make their art. Its first appearance in the act underscores both Landy and Abramović as they describe how they feel after they have finished their respective pieces. The motif is not foregrounded here but still audible in the texture reminding us of the struggle but gaining in richness as it becomes associated with the other artists. Its transformation into the motif for art's struggle is completed at the very end of the opera, as it is the last motif we hear. It underpins Joseph Beuys' art affirming text: 'It must go on!'. This motif forges an association between struggle and pain of one sort or another with the creation of each of the performance art pieces depicted on the

⁵¹ Act 2 scene 3 bars 52–56. The flutes and oboes play *Landy's Struggle* and its subsequent embellishment.

stage. It is possible to extend this element of struggle to the creation of all art of true value. *Breakdown* the opera makes this claim for art in its closing bars.

The finale of act 1 gives us a new motif—*Marina's Pain* (**Fig. 19**). This motif is of particular structural significance as it is the motif present at the moments of greatest dramatic tension in the opera, the ends of act 1 and act 2.

Fig. 19



It contains an oscillating octave gesture that pervades the music of the entire opera (adding a little to the coherence of the musical language) and is the strongest and most instantly recognizable of all of the opera's motifs.⁵² This makes it ideal for signaling the dramatic climaxes within the piece. In the act 1 finale it appears eight times. The first time it appears is at bar 246. This is followed immediately by two further iterations, the first developing the motif rhythmically, the second, harmonically. Each further appearance of *Marina's Pain* in act 1 has a new harmonic context⁵³ that heightens the tension and the drama even further until the final moments of the act

⁵² There are many examples of this, but an obvious and important one is the other motif *Marina's Beauty* discussed earlier in this document. See **Fig. 16**, 54. See also act 1, scene 2 and finale, bars 163–174. The octave oscillation is present in Landy's line at the end of scene 2 and in the vibraphone and flute parts in the act 1 Finale.

⁵³ For example, in the last bars of Act 1 we hear *Marina's Pain*. It is played in unison until the last note, which has a dissonant and harshly rhythmic underpinning.

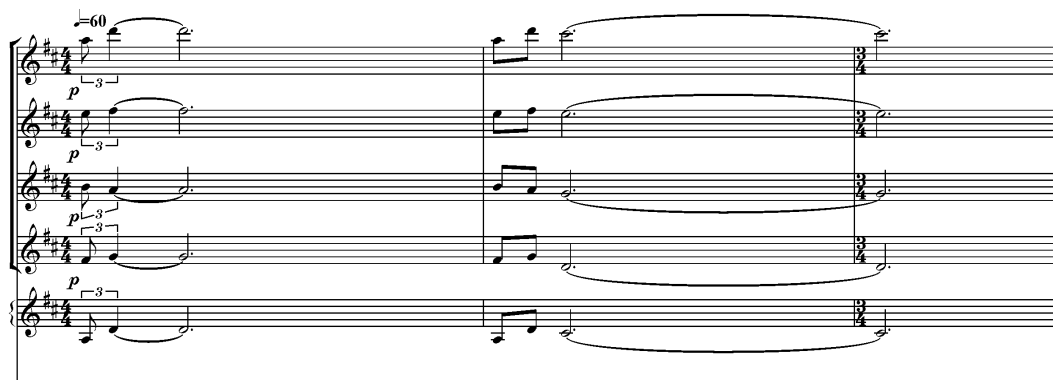
where we hear *Marina's Pain* with a violent and brutal harmonic and rhythmic resolution matching the violence of Marina Male Punter 2 as he threatens:

Give me the blade.
I'll cut her face!

Marina's Pain is heard again in act 2 scene 2 and at the start of the finale to act 2. In both cases it signals to the audience that Marina is in danger. It is the motif used at the dramatic climax of the opera, the last bars of act 2. Here it is transformed from a motif that signals pain to a motif denoting the triumph of all three artists borne from their own sacrifice and pain.

In the opening bars of act 2 we hear *Art Is Great*. This motif is a gesture with a clear rhythm, harmony and texture (**Fig. 20**).

Fig. 20



This motif is unambiguously linked with Joseph Beuys who stands outside the action of the opera and is, in a way, a kind of spiritual leader to the other artists. His motives seem the purest and are the least bound up with his own particular neurosis. His piece, *Explaining pictures to a dead hare*, deals directly with art and the humanity contained

therein. There is something noble about Joseph Beuys and as a result his motif, *Art Is Great*, is coloured with that nobility. It appears again at the beginning of Act 3. It acts as a pivot between the ‘breakdown’ of the finale of Act 2 and the more contemplative and questioning aspect of the third act. Its final appearance (Act 3, bar 425) calls Joseph Beuys back on stage for only the second time in the opera to sing a final hymn to art:

It cannot rest. It is life, breathing or not breathing, being or not being, one is part of the other. It cannot rest.

The connections made through the opera by the use of motifs are essential for its coherence, not only musically, but also at the level of dramatic cogency. The development in the musical functionality of a motif shows us how to perceive events dramatically. For example, compare the end of act 1 which uses Marina’s Pain with a dissonant harmony and open ended rhythmic underpinning to the end of act 2 which also uses Marina’s Pain, but this time with a strong harmonic and rhythmic resolution. This signals clearly to us how we should feel about both moments—the end of act 1 being full of tension, uncertainty and danger while the end of act 2 is a moment of arrival and the fulfillment of the journeys of each artist. In Breakdown this technique sits close to the musical surface almost all the way through helping the audience locate each scene in the overall picture.

HARMONY

Harmony is a central pillar of my music's style. The harmony could be described as tonal. Tonality in itself is not a goal of mine nor indeed do I feel comfortable pigeonholing myself in this way. What is important to me is the access this tonality gives me to developmental possibilities in the music. I am able to manipulate harmony to create points of arrival/departure and tensions like dissonance/resolution that help me keep the music moving from moment to moment with a forward momentum when required and with a sense of cadence when repose is called for in the music and/or text.

The harmonic language of the opera relies on key structures. Here is a breakdown of the main tonal areas in the opera:

Act 1 Scene 1	Act 1 Scene 2	Act 1 Finale	Act 2 Scene 1	Act 2 Scene 2	Act 2 Scene 2	Act 2 Finale	Act 3
Dmaj	Dmaj	Fmaj	Dmaj	Fmin	Dmaj	Fmin	(Dmaj) F#min
Emin	Gmin	Dmin		Dmaj	E _b maj	Cmaj	Dmin
Dmaj	A _b maj	A pedal		Fmin	Emin		Bmin
					Gmin		Cmaj
							Gmin
							Dmaj
							C#maj

This chart shows the predominance of D major in the harmonic fabric of the opera. It is established strongly in act 1, scene 1 in the orchestra and the voices which

repeatedly emphasize a D major triad. From the beginning of act 1 scene 2 the harmony moves away from D only to return at the top of act 2. This return is prepared at the end of the first act with an A pedal starting at bar 361 which gives way, via the F minor from bar 370, to the last chord of the act, a first inversion Amaj/min⁷ with an added augmented fifth. The music at the end of the act 1 is given its logical resolution in the D major of *Explaining Pictures To a Dead Hare* at the beginning of act 2. D major is never left far behind and is absent in only one further scene of the opera, the short act 2 finale. Act 2 finishes in C major but with an element of D major, F[♯], being introduced as a corrupting element, unsettling the centricity of C and making the return to D at the start of Act 3 desirable. At the start of the final act D major only lasts a single crotchet beat. The F[♯] in the bass, introduced on beat number two of the first bar, takes us away from D major and begins the third act's journey back to D in bar 379. From this bar to bar 425, D is consolidated repeatedly as our tonal centre, containing four further strong D major cadences.⁵⁴ This uber-cadence in D coincides with the moment in the opera of greatest dramatic resolution as the artists sing, 'You have had your say. Let it rest, let it rest, let it rest', followed by a moment when the others, in an act of kindness, reach out to help them. Here the harmonic resolution parallels the resolution of tensions between the different characters on stage.

The cadences discussed above happen at structurally important moments in the opera (beginning and end of acts). At a more local level, cadences play an important part in the phrase structure of individual scenes. Cadences are approached predominantly in two ways. The first uses a standard dominant/tonic (V/I) relationship with a version of the chord of V resolving to the chord of I (**Fig 21**).

⁵⁴ Act 3, bars 388–393, 396–401, 406–414, 423–425

Fig 21

178

Picc.
 Fl.2
 Ob.1
 Cl.1
 B. Cl.
 Bsn.1
 Bsn.2
 Hn.1
 Hn.2
 Tpt.1
 Tpt.2
 Tbn.1
 Tbn.2
 Timp.
 Cym.
 MMP2
 Vln. I
 Vln. II
 Vla.
 Vc.
 Cb.

I want no part of ot

The second uses step-wise motion, approaching **I** from the supertonic/flattened supertonic or from the subtonic/leading-note (**Fig.22**).

Fig.22

The musical score for Fig. 22 is a page from a score, featuring several staves. The top two staves are for Mar (Marcello) and MMP2 (Mamma Mia 2), both in treble clef. The Mar staff has lyrics: "was _____ right. _____". The MMP2 staff has lyrics: "_____ a _____ kiss _____". Below these are two staves for the Choir, with lyrics: "she won't speak she won't speak she _____ won't _____ speak. _____" and "speak she won't speak she won't she _____ won't _____ speak. _____". The bottom four staves are for Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla. (Viola), Vc. (Violoncello), and Cb. (Contrabasso), all in treble clef. The Vln. I and Vln. II staves have a *ff* (fortissimo) dynamic marking. The Vla. staff has a *ff* dynamic marking. The Vc. and Cb. staves have a *ff* dynamic marking. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

These examples from act 2, scene 2 are representative of the way phrases/sections are given their closing harmonic gestures all the way through *Breakdown*. Indeed the opera's final moments incorporate a step-wise cadence from D major to the closing harmony of C#major. C#major is a new key in the opera that is given its validity as a harmonic destination by the well established step-wise harmonic movement at

cadence points. The uber-cadence in D (bars 373 to 425) is the tonality in our ears when the final resolution to C# happens later in bar 511 (**Fig.23**).

Fig.23

The musical score for Figure 23 shows a cadence in D major. The Marina part (top staff) has lyrics: "It's just a room but it will de-fine me". The Chorus part (second staff) has lyrics: "It's time". The string instruments (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Ve., Cb.) are marked with *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *arco* (arco). The Vln. I and Vln. II parts have a *mf* marking. The Vla. part has a *mf* marking. The Ve. part has a *mf* marking and a *div.* (divisi) marking. The Cb. part has a *mf* marking. The score is in 2/4 time and D major.

The D major chord is picked up in Marina's part and resolved in the strings to C# major. This key is then allowed to become our final destination by the use of the cadence gesture associated with Landy and his mother (**Fig.23**). In the final bars, this figure is repeated ten times, emphasizing and adding to the opera's closure.

Harmony in *Breakdown* is used to colour individual words in the text. In act 2, scene 1, Joseph Beuys sings the line: ‘In some field does someone grieve you?’ (Fig.24).

Fig.24

The musical score for Joseph Beuys's line 'In some field does someone grieve you?' is shown. The score includes the vocal line (J.B.) and the orchestral accompaniment (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., Cb.). The vocal line is in G major, and the orchestral accompaniment is in E minor. The lyrics are: 'In some field does someone grieve you?'.

Here the D of ‘grieve’ is prepared in relative consonance (7th) over an E minor chord with added 9th and 11th. The word ‘grieve’ is given added poignancy as the D is suspended over the following chord (a superimposition of D minor over C#major) resolving to a C# at the end of the bar. In another example from the end of Michael Landy’s aria in act 1, scene 2, in order to highlight the importance of his line ‘The idea will prevail’, the harmony changes from A flat major to F major. This harmony change, supported by a change of texture (the addition of flute, vibraphone and harp octave oscillations and the tremelando in the first violins), signals the significance of what Landy is saying.

Another technique that pervades the harmony in the opera is a use of chromatic melody over static triadic accompaniment. Here is an example from act 3 (Fig.25),

which has two winding, heavily chromatic contrapuntal lines superimposed over a static C major accompaniment.⁵⁵

Fig.25

The image shows a musical score for a scene. The top staff is for Marina, a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a series of notes with a chromatic, winding melody. Below the notes are the lyrics: "- - - - das, Ju - das, like___ ju - - das___". The bottom staff is for the Piano (Pno.), in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The right hand has a dense, chromatic texture with many notes, while the left hand has a more static, chordal texture. The piano part is marked with a forte (ff) dynamic.

This technique has multiple applications. Barry Le Va's aria in act 3 uses the same technique but at the start of the aria.⁵⁶ The former example is a point of arrival (climax) while the latter is a point of departure.

RHYTHM

The rhythm in *Breakdown* is very important in the delivery of the 'feel' of the opera. It is also the engine room of the music, giving the momentum required from moment to moment. At all times I have tried to make the rhythm in the opera an agent for clarity that supports the audibility of the text and also supports the mood of the scenes. The music often creates mood by setting up repeated rhythmic cells that convey something of the emotional intention of the characters. The 5/8 of the worker's song at the opening and arias sung by Landy and Abramović are examples of this.⁵⁷ Clarity, and not simplicity, is my intention. The opening bars of the opera

⁵⁵ Act 3, bars 175–182

⁵⁶ Act 3, bars 278–315

⁵⁷ Landy's aria begins in act 1, scene 2, bar 65 and Marina's aria is in Act 3, bar 150.

are indeed in 5/8, but by bar three I have already added another rhythmic layer on top. Bar three is in 5/4. For the accompanimental strings, this is equivalent to two bars of the same 5/8 pattern set up in bars one and two but the singers and the oboes, clarinets and percussion are clearly in 5/4 creating a poly-rhythmic effect. The following bar is 6/4 that simply repeats the 5/4 of the previous bar with the same poly-rhythm except this time with an added crotchet beat accommodating the beginning of the next sung line 'We have tabulated and quantified'. In the following two bars, both in 6/8, the rhythm has been altered from the 5/8 not because the text requires it but because the vocal line here is given a more songlike quality with the addition of an extra quaver's length at the start of the bar. The changes made to the opening 5/8 pattern are all subtle, but they illustrate the flexibility of the rhythm as it follows the specific requirements of each moment while at the same time creating a unified rhythmic basis for this opening song. In other words, the 'feel' remains the same even though the pattern is altered. In some cases, the rhythm of a section of music is derived from the words. In the trio that concludes act 1, scene 1, the five syllables of 'How should we use this' suggested to me the oscillating 5/8 rhythmic pattern in the second violin and xylophone line. This pattern then became the basis for the composition of the end of the scene.

Non-accompanimental rhythmic cells are often used to help create 'feel' and to reflect the emotions of the characters on stage. In Landy's aria in act 1, scene 2 the clarinets introduce a motivic cell with an agitated rhythm that mirrors the turmoil in Landy as he first talks about his father (**Fig.26**).

Fig.26

The musical score for Fig. 26, measures 65-70, is written for a full orchestra and includes a vocal line. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Fl.** (Flute): Measures 65-70, mostly rests, with a melodic phrase starting in measure 70 marked *p*.
- Cl.** (Clarinet): Measures 65-70, mostly rests, with a melodic phrase starting in measure 70 marked *pp*.
- Cl.** (Clarinet): Measures 65-70, mostly rests, with a melodic phrase starting in measure 70 marked *pp*.
- Vln. I** (Violin I): Measures 65-70, mostly rests, with a melodic phrase starting in measure 70 marked *p pizz.*
- Vln. II** (Violin II): Measures 65-70, mostly rests, with a melodic phrase starting in measure 70 marked *p pizz.*
- Vla.** (Viola): Measures 65-70, mostly rests, with a melodic phrase starting in measure 70 marked *p*.
- Vc.** (Violoncello): Measures 65-70, mostly rests, with a melodic phrase starting in measure 70 marked *p*.
- Cb.** (Cello): Measures 65-70, mostly rests, with a melodic phrase starting in measure 70 marked *p*.

The vocal line is not visible in the provided image.

This motif continues and is developed as he talks about his father until he first mentions his father's coat. The vocal line is laden with the tragedy of his father's death and his own personal grief at that loss, but the motif, strongly characterized by its rhythm suggests that he is less than comfortable with the destruction of his father's coat.

At all times in the writing of *Breakdown* I have tried to write music that responds appropriately to John Breen's startling text. The clarity of the narrative is supported by music that matches the emotional needs of each character in the stories and every effort has been made to make the text audible and comprehensible. The style of the music is flexible and varied allowing it to match the twists and turns of John's libretto. This flexibility is achieved without compromising on the coherence of the whole.

CHAPTER 4: FROM PAGE TO STAGE

Unlike a piece of electronic music which a composer can listen to fully formed in the studio, *Breakdown*, which needed an orchestra and eighteen singers to be performed had no clear path to being staged. There were a number of failed attempts to bring *Breakdown* to life on the stage. The attempts came in the form of three applications to the Arts Council for funding, none of which were successful. Because of the forces required by *Breakdown*, the money required to mount a single concert performance without any staging elements was costed at close to €80,000. This large cost virtually ruled out any privately funded performance. For the purpose of Arts Council funding, however, the cost was not a particular problem as the Opera Development Award was aimed at projects in that price bracket. Our first application was not considered for funding because it had not been submitted correctly. The sound files entered in support of the application were in the wrong format, making the application ineligible for assessment. The second application was rejected on competitive grounds after the Awards Panel had considered it. The final application for funding to perform *Breakdown* was submitted by the Wexford Opera Festival and Wide Open Opera jointly in 2013, two of the main players on the Irish operatic scene. This proposal also included a commitment from RTE to broadcast the performance on Lyric FM. At the time I was certain that an application made by these two organizations, with artistic directors of national and international reputation, would be seriously considered by the Arts Council awards panel. In the end, the funding never came and the future of *Breakdown* looked bleak.

In May 2014 I mentioned the opera and the trouble I was having with getting it performed to Mairead Hurley, the Head of Vocal Studies in the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama. She was immediately enthusiastic about the opera and its unusual story line and suggested that the vocal department in the DIT could take it on for performance in January 2015. Mairead suggested the idea to the Head of Orchestral Studies, Cliona Doris, and she committed the DIT Symphony Orchestra to the project. The date was set for the 20th of January 2015 and the opera was to be performed with Paul Alday's Symphony to celebrate the launch of the new Master of Music programmes in the DIT for repetiteurs and opera singers.

Preparation For Performance

The first obstacle to overcome on the road to the first performance was the opera's content. When the materials of the opera (the score, midi recordings and the libretto) were submitted to Mairead Hurley in July of 2014, she let me know that she was happy that the opera could go ahead in January 2015. Mairead asked one of the faculty voice teachers, Jennifer Hamilton, to oversee any staging requirements for the opera. Jennifer immediately flagged a problem with the graphic content of the end of Act 1, which at the time included the words:

I won't cut her face, I'll cut her cunt.

Jennifer Hamilton shared her concerns with me and the other staff members involved in the opera – Mairead Hurley, Cliona Doris and Gordon Munro. At that point, there was serious consideration given to dropping *Breakdown* from the January

performance and replacing it with something less offensive. I know, from discussing the matter at length with Jennifer Hamilton, that her own worries stemmed from the difficulty of *staging* the graphic moments of the opera for a mixed and unsuspecting audience. Other objections centered around the inappropriate nature of the content for the younger members of the orchestra, some of whom were only fifteen years of age. I made it clear that I was prepared to make any changes necessary to allow for the opera's performance, and immediately produced a revised version of the libretto (with John Breen's approval) which softened the tone of any material likely to cause offence while maintaining the arc of the story and the element of imminent threat to Marina's safety. The above line, for example was changed to:

Give me the blade. I'll cut her face.

Without these changes, there was a very real danger that the opera would not be performed. Jennifer's initial concerns were related to staging graphic moments (e.g. the threat made by MMP2 to cut Marina's genitals) rather than text, or in other words, the acting rather than the saying or singing of these moments. If it had been decided at the outset that there would be no staging elements and that the opera would be presented in a concert performance, then these objections may not have arisen until a late stage in the opera's rehearsal process when amendments would have presented real problems to the young performers trying to learn the music.

The decision was made to present the opera in concert. One reason for this was related to the venue, the National Concert Hall in Dublin. Dublin's NCH is unsuitable for opera performance. The stage itself is a good size, but there is no orchestra pit and

so the orchestra has to be either on the stage or on the floor in the stalls in the place of the first few rows of seats. There are no bars for hanging lights and the off stage area is unsuitable for theatrical presentation. The agreement between the DIT and the NCH was already in place before it was decided to do *Breakdown* and it included the stipulation that no seats would be removed from the stalls. This stipulation meant that the orchestra would have to be on the stage, leaving only the front of the stage available as a playing space for the singers.

Space is only one of the problems associated with this stage setup. Contact between singers and conductor is severely impaired as the singers fan out in either direction across the front of the stage or, for the sake of the staging, play the scenes looking away from the conductor entirely. It is not desirable for a singer to disengage from the scene he/she is playing to check in with a conductor. Peripheral vision is useful but limited and cannot be relied on in many circumstances. In order to properly see a conductor in this circumstance the singer needs to turn towards him/her. It is not feasible to turn like this while projecting the voice's sound out into the auditorium over an orchestra (the volume of which is not lessened by the dampening effect of an orchestra pit). Most singers naturally and understandably prioritize projection over ensemble and volume over dynamic subtlety. In a concert performance the singers fan out across the front of the stage, creating the same difficulties in maintaining contact with the conductor. This problem is often overcome by the use of a camera trained on the conductor and screens placed in the auditorium displaying the image. The National Concert Hall did not have this facility. Notwithstanding this, a concert version provided the greatest chance of a musically clean performance that could be recorded and used to help promote the opera in the future. I was fully behind the

decision to present the music in concert. Concert performances of operas are a popular and common way of presenting operas. The principle advantage to the producer is one of cost. A concert performance is a fraction of the cost of a fully staged version of any opera. In spite of the awkward stage position mentioned above, the music gets the full attention of the singers during a concert performance. Because of this some composers prefer to hear their operas in concert versions.⁵⁸ So much is lost however—sets, costumes, lighting, blocking, etc.— that the question arises whether a concert performance of an opera, irrespective of musical accuracy, is of any real artistic value? The answer lies in the music. It is the ability of the composers to bring stories to life in sound, without the trappings of theatrical presentation, which validates these performances and has created a seemingly insatiable appetite for concert versions of masterpieces by Verdi, Puccini and Bizet in particular. Dramatically expressive music is the bedrock of great opera in spite of the multitude of other elements related to staging of the finished piece and not unlike other musics attached to spectacle—religious music and ballet for example—has been a mainstay in concert repertoire throughout the latter part of the 20th century and on into the present. Even though I have a strong preference for seeing opera fully staged, I have no qualms with the presentation of any opera, including *Breakdown*, in concert. Furthermore, I felt that it would have been asking too much of the young singers to present an entirely new opera—the musical difficulties of which remained an unknown and unpredictable entity—without the backup of a fully professional theatre/opera company in a properly equipped theatre.

⁵⁸ “For me the concert performance is the ideal.....You had people performing live with elements of acting, and the rest of the production you could kind of project into it yourself.” Raymond Deane from an interview with Michael Dervan about a concert performance of his opera *The Alma Fetish*. Irish Times (September 16, 2013).

Casting

The casting of *Breakdown* presented several challenges. The first challenge was to find voices to match the specific demands of each part. I was not entirely clear which voice type would fit each part. What was most important to me was that after establishing the singer could reach all of the notes, the high points of the vocal line were delivered with the appropriate resonances and at the appropriate volume. If, for instance, the climax of a line is an F^{#5}, then a mezzo-soprano must sing the part so that their voices will contain the appropriate tension at the correct volume while singing that note. A soprano would only be reaching that point in her voice on an A⁵, a minor third above and so an F[#] would sound underwhelming if sung by a soprano. These moments of climax in the music were the most important elements in locating each part on the spectrum of voice type.

A line can have a range singable by a baritone or a tenor, but have a tessitura for only one. Tessitura is not really about range, but rather about where the part lies on average in a singer's voice. For example, in Wagner's Ring cycle of operas, the music written for the role of Siegfried ranges from C^{#3} to C⁵, but the tessitura is described as high, because the phrases are most often in the range of C⁴ to A⁴. An example of this in *Breakdown* is Landy Worker 1, a role that was originally offered to Peter O Reilly, a light tenor. This part was not demanding in terms of range but the tessitura was uncomfortably high for his voice (between D⁴ and F^{#4}), and so he was offered Landy Worker 2. Landy Punter 1 was offered to Shane Barriscale, a singer with a naturally higher-lying voice than Peter's. The size of the part has a considerable bearing on the

issue of tessitura. In the case of Landy Worker 1, the part, while not long and arduous when compared to Siegfried, still presents stamina challenges for light voices trying to project over an orchestra. The parts of Barry le Va and Joseph Beuys both presented problems of tessitura for the chosen singers. An additional problem was that the ranges of the parts pushed both singers to their extremes. The part of Joseph Beuys resembles a tenor part in range and could easily be rewritten to fit a tenor's voice. I made changes to both parts to keep the music within the actual range of the singers and to allow them to show off their particular vocal qualities without the pressure of reaching for notes at the edges of their singable ranges (**Fig.27**).

Fig.27

Small notes were used in the first performance.

The musical score for Figure 27 is arranged in six staves. The top staff is for the vocal part, labeled 'J.B.' on the left. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The lyrics 'Or wear their skins' are written below the staff. The vocal line consists of several measures, with a note marked with a small '8' below it. The second staff is for Violin I, labeled 'Vln. I', and the third for Violin II, labeled 'Vln. II'. Both have treble clefs and a 2/4 time signature. The Violin II part includes a '3 unis.' marking. The fourth staff is for Viola, labeled 'Vla.', with an alto clef and a 2/4 time signature. The fifth staff is for Violoncello, labeled 'Vc.', with a bass clef and a 2/4 time signature. The sixth staff is for Contrabass, labeled 'Cb.', with a bass clef and a 2/4 time signature. The instrumental parts include various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and are connected by a large brace at the bottom.

In the case of Barry le Va, I removed a falsetto marking (**Fig.28**) from the finale of act two because the singers quality in the lower octave improved the moment and more clearly allowed the story to be understood.⁵⁹

Fig.28

27 half voice,
 A-nus aches piss down my leg di-arr-hoe-ia drib-ble toe-nails loose__ heart

33 falsetto deleriously becomes a genuine scream of agony
 aches__ boom boom boom boom boom boom boom boom ow!_____

41 12

The preponderance of male voices in the opera was a major difficulty when it came to casting. The intention of the DIT Conservatory was to cast the opera from among the students on the Masters in Music degree. Landy Punter 1 and Landy Punter 2 were parts written for men, but were allocated to women because of the lack of good female parts and of course the lack of men to take the roles. This change was a good thing for the opera as it lessened the bottom heavy quality in the ensembles that would have resulted from the presence of so many men in the cast. Without enough sopranos and altos there would have been difficulties in ensembles in Act 3 and at the end of Act 2. We would have needed to cast women with the sole purpose of singing in the ensembles. This would have been acceptable, as the ensemble size is not prescribed in

⁵⁹ Act 2 finale, bars 27–45.

the score. Depending on stage size, the scenes might benefit from the presence of extra bodies on stage supplied by a separate chorus. A chorus was not available to me in this instance, and so the ensembles needed to be sung by the soloists. This was achieved without doing any damage to the music, with the exception of one place in act 1, scene 2 (**Fig. 29**). In this example, what are essentially two chromatic lines (E \flat /B \flat , D/A, D \flat /A \flat) are sung by Landy and LP2 in different octaves, and so are less effective. To facilitate the casting of the available singers, this was a small and relatively insignificant compromise to be made.

Fig. 29

The musical score for Figure 29 consists of three staves. The top staff is for 'Lan.' and features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. It contains a triplet of eighth notes with the lyrics 'It's an i-de-a'. The middle staff is for 'LP1' and contains a whole rest. The bottom staff is for 'LP2' and contains a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. It features a lower melodic line with the lyrics 'so write it down, it's the same thing'.

Perhaps the most radical change that needed to be made was to the part of Marina Male Punter 1. This part was written for a high, dramatic tenor voice that was crucial for some of the most dramatic music in the opera in the first scene and finale of Act 1. Marina Male Punter 1 is also required to sing in duet with Marina Female Punter 1 from bar 231 to bar 246 of the Act 1 Finale. This is the only part of the music where MMP1 needs to sing softly and with delicacy. We could not find a singer who was

capable of singing with the required vocal weight throughout the part and so for the performance I was forced to divide the part in two and create another role, Marina Male Punter 4, to take the duet near the start of the Act 1 Finale. This change was more radical than a mere division of the part between two singers. The text sung in the duet in those bars (230–246) of the finale is the same for both MMP1 and MFP1.

Her gaze caresses me. Lamb of God Vishnu. Christ on the cross. Monks
burning in the street. A vessel for the sins of the world. Soft. Yielding.
Containing (Sung by MFP1 only). Healing.

The original intention was that the adoring words of MFP1 were echoed by MMP1 but with an entirely different motivation—one bristling with sexual intention. I considered that that could not be conveyed by a new male character who had (up to this point) not contributed a syllable to the action of the opera, without first establishing what his character traits were. Because of this, in the performance, MMP4 echoes MFP1 in both text *and* intention. This was satisfactory, but I would have preferred if it could have been presented as originally intended. The vocal difficulties of singing the entire role are considerable even for a mature singer, and so it is a good thing that an alternative performance option exists and is acceptable.

The final cast for Breakdown performed in the NCH in Dublin on the 20th of January 2015 was:

Landy Worker 1:	Shane Barriscale (Tenor)
Landy Worker 2:	Peter O'Reilly (Tenor)
Landy Worker 3:	Kevin Neville (Baritone)

Marina Abramović:	Chloe Morgan (Soprano)
Marina Assistant:	Ailbhe Howard (Contralto)
Michael Landy:	Jonathan Raman (Tenor)
Marina Female Punter 1:	Rachel Goode (Soprano)
Marina Male Punter 1:	Ian Whyte (Tenor)
Marina Male Punter 2:	Conleth Stanley (Baritone)
Landy Punter 1:	Muireann Mulrooney (Mezzo Soprano)
Landy Punter 2:	Lynsey Curtin (Soprano)
Marina Male Punter 4:	Peter O'Reilly (Tenor)
Marina Female Punter 2:	Elsbeth Hayes (Mezzo Soprano)
Marina Male Punter 3:	Stephan Corlade (Baritone)
Joseph Beuys:	David Scott (Baritone)
A Journalist:	Lynsey Curtin (Soprano)
Michael Landy's Mother:	Gabrielle Mulcahy (Soprano)
Barry le Va:	David Howse (Baritone)

Five tenor, and five baritone parts to fill in any opera is a tall order for any institution. In addition, the part of Marina requires a singer of exceptional ability to carry off its extreme vocal demands, and so it was very fortunate that the vocal resources existed at the time of asking to sing *Breakdown*.

Vocal Score

A vocal score is one of the most important tools in the rehearsal of operas, oratorios and songs where an orchestra or instrumental ensemble plays with singers or vocalists/vocalisers. A vocal score should contain, where possible, all of the audible elements of the musical argument and render them playable by a single pianist. It contains all of the vocal lines and the text clearly laid out so that everyone can easily relate voice/text to instrumental accompaniment. It should also provide all of the information contained in the full score (dynamics, tempi, expression marks, etc.). Without vocal scores, opera rehearsals would not really be possible. It is also a phenomenon of rehearsal of music theatre pieces and of new operas (that retain the flexibility to change during the first stage rehearsals) that changes are made and inserted into rehearsal scores and never quite make it into the full scores. As a result, there are many cases where the version of the music in the vocal score is considered to be the pre-eminent version and all discrepancies between scores are resolved by reference to the vocal score. A good example of this is Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* where multiple versions, both staged and recorded, leave companies producing the work with no certainty as to what is the definitive intention of the composer in numerous places in the music. These uncertainties are a mixture of mistakes in the hand written scores and parts (a rare problem these days) and changes made during the rehearsals and first performances of the work that have not made it into the scores. This problem is resolved by resorting to the certainty and unanimity of the vocal score. Even in situations where the opposite is true, i.e. that the full score is considered to be the accurate representation of the composers wishes, since the version in the vocal score is what the singers learn, it often becomes the de facto

version for the performances. It is almost impossible to change things that are practiced and rehearsed for months by the singers in the final rehearsals and in the lead up to the performances.

The vocal score, as mentioned above is normally written to be playable by a single pianist. When I set about producing my own score I was overwhelmed by the desire to include all of the harmonic and melodic content, and as much textural information as possible. This led me to produce a vocal score with two piano parts. The intention was that the first piano would have the most important information needed for rehearsal and the second piano would contain other secondary information (like counter melodies etc.). In practice it turned out that the two piano version was ridiculously over complicated and caused more problems than it solved. At the most basic level possible it meant that the pianist(s) needed to turn the page too often for comfort, up to 50% more than would be normal for an opera repetiteur. From a repetiteur's point of view this is an unnecessary extra hassle in delivering an already arduous task over a long working day. Repetiteurs can be required to work three, three-hour sessions in a day. It is physically demanding work, and so extra work in the form of page turns is unacceptable. From the conductors point of view, anything that means the pianist has to lift one of his/her hands from the keys, interrupting the flow of the music, is a hindrance in the delivery of the final performance and as such is to be avoided at all costs.

The goal of producing a two piano version where one piano contained the most important information proved to be illusive at a first attempt. In many places, the relative importance of a certain piece of musical information over another did not

become absolutely clear until rehearsals started. In other words, it was not absolutely clear what the singers needed to hear in order to be able to rehearse effectively. This meant that in practice, the répétiteur, as rehearsals progressed, was forced to jump between the two piano parts, at times discarding material in the main piano part in favour of material in the other piano part. This again made the répétiteur's job more difficult and in many places made the realization of the score on the piano less than satisfactory, causing as it did, reading lapses and continuity problems that would not have been present if the score had been represented by a single piano part. This led to a revision of sections of the vocal score as rehearsals progressed. Because time was so short, this revision was only partial. If the opera were ever to be performed again, the entire vocal score would need reworking. It is important that during rehearsals the music sounds convincing at any given moment, even if it does not fully reflect the orchestral part. A loss in quality, even if just for the rehearsals, can have a damaging effect on the performers confidence in the music they are attempting to learn.

Orchestra

I was very lucky to have had the involvement of the DIT's symphony orchestra in the performance of *Breakdown*. Orchestras are difficult to access for student composers and are completely inaccessible to many until they become more established in their careers. Because of the large number of players involved, rehearsals and performances needing orchestras (either amateur or professional) require a team of people organizing and facilitating them. The orchestra for *Breakdown* was mostly made up of students, and so there were a number of difficulties, (common to many student or amateur musical ensembles) encountered along the way. The orchestral

rehearsals for *Breakdown* were conducted weekly from mid November to late December and then in the two weeks preceding the performance there were a further seven rehearsals. For a piece of music lasting eighty minutes, this amount of rehearsal should be more than enough. Unfortunately, poor attendance at rehearsals meant that, in the end, *Breakdown* went into performance under-rehearsed. As alluded to above, large holes in the musical texture during rehearsals can have a devastating effect on a performers' confidence in the piece they are performing. It is no exaggeration to say that the orchestra was only assembled in full on one occasion—on the day of the performance. As a result of this, nearly everyone who sung or played in *Breakdown* was surprised by the piece they finally performed.

The longish rehearsal period did allow me time to discuss aspects of bowing with the string players which helped make the parts sit more comfortably on the instruments. **Fig.30** shows the first violin part before amendments were made and **Fig.31** shows the amended line.

Fig.30



Fig.31



As a keyboard player with no experience of playing string instruments I had made a number of decisions that did not achieve the desired effect when played. I was afforded the luxury during rehearsal to try various bowing options with the players, thereby maximizing the chance of creating the effect I wanted. If my bowings had been presented to the National Symphony Orchestra for example, I may not have had the time (or the good will) from the players to make changes.

Breakdown was performed on the 20th of January 2015. The performance itself was gutsy and committed and gave a real sense of what the opera's potential would be if it were to be staged. There were moments of exceptional beauty in both the singing and the playing. The response to this performance was overwhelmingly positive. I hope that *Breakdown* will come to life fully on stage sometime in the future and will take its place in the world of opera with regular performances. At the moment, in the current funding climate, it does not appear that any of the existing Irish opera companies are willing to take the risk. Whatever the future for *Breakdown*, the process of its composition detailed in this document has given me an enormous boost as a composer.

CONCLUSION

Music seems to be understood best by its proximity to other music that is more familiar. We do not hear what we hear....only what we remember.⁶⁰

Morton Feldman

The music in *Breakdown* is heterogeneous in nature. It draws on a very wide range of influences that includes the operas of Verdi, Puccini and Richard Strauss, the organ music of Olivier Messiaen, the harmonic world of Steve Reich, the music of Thomas Tallis, Igor Stravinsky, Stephen Sondheim, Bernard Hermann and many more. The intention behind the composition of the music is that each note is involved in the telling of the stories so vividly brought to life in John Breen's exceptional and startling libretto. Even more importantly, the music tries to match the emotional journeys of each of the characters as these stories unfold. To do this, the musical style in *Breakdown* remains flexible and fluid throughout, dipping into a deep reservoir of influences. This musical alchemy, carrying the powerful narratives of John Breen's text, creates a unique operatic experience. Michael Torke is a composer whose music displays a similarly wide range of influences. In his orchestral piece *Javelin* for instance references to Beethoven and John Williams co-exist with a minimalism suggestive of John Adams and Philip Glass. The flexibility of Torke's musical language can accommodate rock music too, as in *Pop'pea* (2012), his adaptation of Monteverdi's opera *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. In the following quote from Torke's own program note for his work *Book Of Proverbs* (1996), I see a strong parallel with my own preoccupations as a composer.

⁶⁰ Feldman, M., 2000. *Give my regards to Eighth Street: collected writings of Morton Feldman*. Exact change.

Clarity in my composing is a chief concern and goal. I seek orchestrations that are transparent, and a musical unfolding which is straightforward and logical. But above all, in this piece, I believe a listener can really hear what I am doing with the notes because of my use of text, all the while letting the meaning of these various proverbs have room, through the various arrangements of words, to penetrate gradually into the mind and soul of the listener.⁶¹

Clarity, transparency and logic are important guiding principles of my operatic language which function to serve the text and bring the meaning into focus. Torke often plays with word order in his vocal music by tying individual words to pitches and then playing with the order in which the pitches are sounded. My own approach is more directly linked to the meaning of the text and avoids constructs that makes immediate understanding for the audience more difficult.

Opera is arguably the most collaborative of all art forms. An enormous amount of the finished product, (i.e. a fully staged presentation of the work), relies on the skills and the artistic vision of others. Of course, when a composer hands his music over to a conductor and orchestra he/she entrusts the final performance to the skills and musical sensibilities of other musicians. In the case of opera, in addition to the musicians and singers, the composer must entrust his work to the hands of producers, directors, lighting designers, stage and costume designers and choreographers. All of these people have creative input into the final product. Knowing this, it is a good idea for composers of opera to have an intimate knowledge of the workings of the mechanics of theatre. This knowledge enables the composer to anticipate what the staging requirements of a piece might be from one given moment to another. There are many

⁶¹ Michael Torke official website. *Book of Proverbs* (1996). Programme note, retrieved from <http://www.michaeltorke.com/compositions.php?yearcheck=1998#>

levels and layers to this. At a very simple level, if music is required for an action to take place, (e.g. an entrance or exit) then enough music must be provided to allow time for this to happen. If the stage is small, less music is required than if the stage is large. At another level, the quality of the music should suggest the action, or more precisely, it should suggest the demeanour of the character as the character exits or the emotional state within the drama as a whole during this exit. At another level again, the composer must match the music's requirement for structural repose, (e.g. cadences) with the drama's requirement for the same. It is important to accurately measure the effect of music on its theatrical surroundings. When the drama needs to have, or be given, forward moving impetus, the composer must gauge how to do this in a way that serves the drama *and* the music. If we delve deeper into the emotional core of a libretto, before a note can even be composed, the composer needs to develop a relationship to the words on the page and start to translate them into feelings that will form the heart and soul of the finished piece.

The definition of opera is widening with every passing year. Operas are no longer tied absolutely to narrative in the way that was essential for Mozart, Verdi or Puccini. Operas have the freedom to exist in a more symbolic/poetic place without the confines of a story structure.⁶² Opera can now be almost completely abstract. For an example of this we need look no further than the opera *XXX Live Nude Girls!!!* by Irish composer Jennifer Walshe. Walshe's opera is written almost as the antithesis of traditional opera. Walshe is an interesting example of what is possible at the outer limits of an artform as she consistently reaches for those limits and beyond. Her work rejects convention as completely as is possible. She is brave and uncompromising in

⁶² The third act of *Nixon in China* moves almost completely out of the realms of storytelling.

her choices and her music/operas reap the rewards of this. Similarities between Walshe's work and my own are not numerous, but I hope that I set about my business as a composer with the same clarity of purpose. The presence of a story and a strong narrative structure is a strength I do not want to give up. I want to write music that carries stories and amplifies the emotion contained in them.

The collaboration between librettist and composer is the core relationship at the heart of opera, particularly when story needs to be put across with clarity. In the case of *Breakdown*, John Breen's draft libretto created a mass of material from which I had room to pick and choose passages which would best fit story and music in tandem. There is precedent for this approach in the collaboration of Verdi and Boito.⁶³ Boito, the last of Verdi's collaborators, produced enormous amounts of material and Verdi cut and remoulded as he saw fit. Boito himself was a composer in a world where opera was king. Boito and Verdi debated endlessly about their work together. They were truly on the same page. John had little or no experience of opera or its wider musical context before writing *Breakdown*, yet managed to craft a powerful and compelling work full of drama and emotion. Because of my experience as an opera conductor, répétiteur and chorus master, final decisions tended to be left to me. As I look forward to future collaborations I will take steps to maintain an equilibrium of creativity in the final work. This is especially important now. In the time of Verdi it was understood that the composer had primacy in the creation of the work. The writers with whom I collaborate are of equal standing in the arts scene and therefore must be afforded a high level of control over the finished product. To an extent, the

⁶³ Gilles de Van, 1998. *Verdi's theater: creating drama through music*. University of Chicago 70–72

composer must walk a tightrope between the poet/writer and the thrust of his/her own genius. Both should be served.

As Verdi once commented, collaboration can be a painful and frustrating process:

How much fuss goes into the making of an opera nowadays! Journalists, chorus, artists, stage directors, musicians, etc., etc... Each must bring his brick to raise the edifice of *réclame* and erect a framework of small miseries that do not add a thing to the value of an opera but, on the contrary, obscure its real worth. It is deplorable, deeply deplorable!⁶⁴

Verdi's impatience with the 'edifice' of opera is clear. He oversaw the transition of Italian opera from locally produced, quickly written, and cheaply presented works designed to please the masses, to lavish, large scale presentations in huge theatres with large orchestras, chorus and elaborate staging that were promoted into a realm beyond taste to the status of Art. For a composer who has lived with a work from the second of its inception, the staging of an opera can feel like death by a thousand cuts. When things are not going well, every intervention can hurt. The orchestra can be too loud, the singers can be out of tune or behind the beat, the lighting can be too bright (or too dark), entrances too slow, stage too big, set too overbearing, staging too busy etc. On the other hand, when everything is working well, it is clear to me that the greatness of opera as handed down by the European composers like Mozart, Verdi and Puccini, lies in the fact that it calls on a vast array of creative talents to fulfill its promise. In Verdi's case, and in spite of the many frustrations he experienced, he was so intoxicated by opera that he spent almost all of his creative life writing operas. It could be argued that Mozart found the most perfect application of his genius in the realm of opera (Cairns 2006, p151).⁶⁵ They chose to hand over their creativity to

⁶⁴ Osborne, C., 1971. *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi*. London: Gollancz, 297.

⁶⁵ Cairns, D., 2006. *Mozart and his operas*. Univ of California Press, 151.

others to mold and shape into the finished product because of what was possible on an operatic stage. They were the ultimate opera composers—genius musicians who understood the transformative power of the theatre and had the vision to accommodate and lead other artists in the creation of enduring works of art. It is my love of theatres and the people in them that has led me on the long and winding path to the writing of an opera and it is my love of opera as handed down by the great composers of the past which has informed every bar of Breakdown.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cairns, D., 2006. *Mozart and his operas*. Univ of California Press.

Gilles de Van, 1998. *Verdi's theater: creating drama through music*. University of Chicago Press.

Feldman, M., 2000. *Give my regards to Eighth Street: collected writings of Morton Feldman*. Exact change.

Millington, B. ed., 1992. *The Wagner compendium: a guide to Wagner's life and music*. Schirmer Trade Books.

Stephoe, A., 1988. *The Mozart-Da Ponte operas: the cultural and musical background to Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte*. Oxford University Press.

Strunk, W.O. and Treitler, L., 1998. *Source readings in music history*. WW Norton & Company.

Styles, Kristine; Biesenback, Klaus; Iles, Chrissie, 2008. *Marina Abramović*. Phaedon Press.

Verdi, G. and Osborne, C., 1971. *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi*. Gollancz.

Warrack, J.H. and West, E., 1992. *The Oxford dictionary of opera*. Oxford University Press, USA.

APPENDIX 1

***Breakdown* libretto**

First Draft

Appendix 1 contains the first draft of John Breen's libretto for *Breakdown*. It is presented here exactly as I received it.

Act 1

As the audience mill about in the foyer they will hear two notes being hummed or chanted.

They will also hear the sound of two heartbeats. These are the miked heartbeats of the performers playing MARINA and ULAY.

The will then be invited to enter the audiotorium one at a time.

As they enter the auditorium they will have to pass between the two naked performers who form a doorway, by facing each other. There will be just enough room for just one member of the the public to pass through, as they do they will be forced to choose between facing either the Marina character or the Ulay character in order to squeeze in.

The moment they pass through the opening they will be photographed. This photograph will then be projected in the auditorium as they take their seats.

While this is happening the performers will sing the following.

(THE SEQUENCE CAN BE REPEATED
UNTIL ALL THE AUDIENCE ARE
SEATED, THIS COULD TAKE SOME
TIME OR ONLY A SELECTION OF
THE AUDIENCE CAN BE INVITED TO
PARTICIAPATE IN THIS WAY.)

MARINA

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
your hair brushes against my mouth.

ULAY

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
I hold your gaze.

MARINA

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
I sense you near me.

ULAY

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
I hold you inside me

MARINA

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
I inhale you.

ULAY

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
I cradle your fears

MARINA

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
I embrace you.

ULAY

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
I cannot reach you.

MARINA

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
Bow in my hand, tip at my heart.

ULAY

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
Holding your life in my hands I lean from you.

MARINA

Walking towards you for a thousand miles.
I speak for you.

ULAY

Walking towards you for a thousand miles.
I love you.

MARINA

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
I see you.

ULAY/MARINA

Walking towards you for a thousand miles
To leave you.

The last line is only sung as the
last member of the public passes
through.

While the audience members are taking
their seats and before the orchestra
take theirs FAITH WILDING is sitting
on stage.

The beginning of Waiting should be
timed so that both pieces end at the
same time.

(Ulay and Marina can be heard inside
the auditorium so Faith wildings
music should connect with it in some
way)

FAITH

Waiting to be born
 Waiting for her to notice me
 Waiting for her to pick me up
 Waiting for her to feed me
 Waiting for her to wind me
 Waiting for her to change me
 Waiting for her to look
 Waiting
 Waiting to be a big girl
 Waiting to join in
 Waiting to wear a bra
 Waiting to menstruate
 Waiting for a boyfriend
 Waiting to be kissed
 Waiting to be touched
 Waiting to for someone to pick me up
 Waiting to have a boyfriend
 Waiting to go to a party
 Waiting to be asked to dance
 Waiting to dance close
 WaitingWaiting to be beautiful
 Waiting for the secret
 Waiting for life to begin
 Waiting
 Waiting for him to notice me
 Waiting for him to feed me
 Waiting for him to look
 Waiting for him to ask me out
 Waiting for him to pay attention to me
 Waiting
 Waiting for him to fall in love with me
 Waiting for my wedding night
 Waiting for him to come home
 Waiting for him to fill my time
 Waiting for him to want me
 Waiting for him to enter me
 Waiting
 Waiting for the baby to come
 Waiting for my belly to swell
 Waiting for my breasts to fill with milk
 Waiting to feel my baby move
 Waiting for my legs to stop swelling
 Waiting for my hemorrhoids to subside
 Waiting for the first contractions
 Waiting for the contractions to end
 Waiting for the head to emerge
 Waiting for the first scream
 Waiting for the afterbirth
 Waiting
 Waiting for the bay to suck my milk
 Waiting for my baby to stop crying
 Waiting for my baby to sleep through the night

Waiting for my breasts to dry up
 Waiting to get my figure back
 Waiting to be beautiful again
 Waiting for my child to go to school
 Waiting for life to begin again Waiting . . .

Waiting for my children to come home from school
 Waiting for them to grow up, to leave home
 Waiting to be myself
 Waiting for excitement
 Waiting for him to tell me something interesting
 Waiting for him to ask me how I feel
 Waiting for him to stop being crabby
 Waiting for him to reach for my hand
 Waiting for him to kiss me good morning
 Waiting for fulfillment.

Waiting for the children to marry
 Waiting for something to happen
 Waiting . . .
 Waiting to lose weight
 Waiting for the first gray hair
 Waiting for menopause
 Waiting
 Waiting for my body to break down, to get ugly
 Waiting for my flesh to sag
 Waiting for my breasts to shrivel up
 Waiting for a visit from my children
 Waiting for my friends to die
 Waiting for my husband to die Waiting . . .
 Waiting to get sick
 Waiting for things to get better
 Waiting for winter to end
 Waiting for the mirror to tell me that I'm old
 Waiting for a good bowel movement
 Waiting for the pain to go away
 Waiting for the struggle to end
 Waiting for release
 Waiting for morning
 Waiting for the end of the day
 Waiting for sleep
 Waiting . . .

BLACKOUT

In the dark we hear the beginnings of
 Barry le Va's Velocity piece no.2

When the lights come up after about
 fifteen seconds we see Le Va on a
 raised platform which runs the entire
 width of the stage, the walls and
 ceiling of which is painted. There is
 a microphone stand near each wall. The
 microphones amplify his steps and the
 impacts.

These sounds will intrude on the action of other scene at specific moments.

Le Va is found running between the walls and crashing into the stage left wall. When he has crashed into one wall he will turn around run towards the other wall and crash into that one. This will go on for the duration of the performance. (Just before the last scene he will be replaced by a singer who s suitably made up and who will sing his aria.)

In another space, Marina Abrahmovic enters fully dressed and begins placing objects on a table at the back of her space. She lists them as she places them.

MARINA

Blue paint
comb
pocket knife
spoon
cotton
matches
flowers
candle
water
glass
scarf
chains
a rose
nails
needle
safety pin
hair pin
brush
razor blade
bandage
red paint
white paint
feather
Lipstick
scissors
pen
book
hat

handkerchief
 sheet of white paper
 kitchen knife
 hammer
 saw
 piece of wood
 stick
 bullet
 bone of lamb
 newspaper
 bread
 wine
 polaroid camera
 honey
 salt
 sugar
 soap
 perfume bottle
 cake
 metal pipe
 scalpel
 metal spear
 bell
 dish
 flute
 band aid
 alcohol
 medal
 gun
 coat
 shoes
 chair
 leather strings
 yarn
 wire
 sulphur
 Grapes
 Olive oil
 rosemary branch
 apple

Now the orchestra is in position and
 the overture to the opera plays as;

MICHAEL LANDY and his 3 workers enter
 They wheel on their machines which
 are shredders and grinders of various
 kinds. They make industrial noises.
 The workers test the machines. Landy
 surveys the lists and goes about
 picking the next batch of his
 possessions to be destroyed.

As the workers sing they will from
time to time, name an object and
place it in the shredder. The
shredder won't be practical but will
eject dust. We will have a musical or
electronic effect to represent the
noise of the mechanism.

The following takes place as the
workers and Landy wheel on the
machines and boxes of objects.

It is a cheery workers song.

WORKERS

Everything must go.
everything must go.
We have tabulated and quantified
all his things must go.
Airfix model spitfires
Shirts from oxfam
jockey shorts from BHS
Pyjamas from oxfam
All his vinyl records
Stamp collection too
Old love letters concert tickets
and presents from his mam.

A spandau ballet poster
Moccasins from Guam
A saab nine eleven
A wok and a plastic lamb

Everything must go
Every thing must go
Al that he has and all
that he is, we'll grind to dust
in a sack.

he'll be left with nothing
standing naked on the floor
we get eight fifty an hour
could a student ask for more?

Paperback fiction, rubber plants
A plastic warren to house his ants
Panty hose and shoe polish
frozen peas and chutney relish
Plastic soldiers and video disks
Catalogues and programmes
seeds and jeans
Prophylactics
Anatomy books and magic tricks

Everything must go, everything must go.

An ergonomic footstool a camp bed and a telescope
Herbs spices biscuit tins
a coffe maker and a skipping rope.

Pass port, Birth cert, Bank book, credit card
Drivers licence Everything must go.

WORKER 1
Why doesn't he give it away?

WORKER 2
It's against the rules.

WORKER 1
I could use a coat like that.

WORKER 2
You don't do something like this..

WORKER 1
And the car.

WORKER 2
And cheat. London Calling single.

Worker 2 puts the object into the shredder.

WORKER 1
Desktop Calculator.

Worker 1 puts the object into the shredder.

WORKER 2
Toaster.

Worker 2 crosses the item off the list at the back. This is done in a ritualistic way as is placing the object in the shredder.

WORKER 1
Is he going to kill himself at the end?

WORKER 2
No.

WORKER 1
Then he 's not really destroying everything is he?

WORKER 2
His possessions.

He owns his life. WORKER 1

He can't do anything illegal. WORKER 2

What's wrong with you? Look at him. This is hard for him. WORKER 3

Dinky toy Red Bread Van. WORKER 2

Marina stands in the centre of her space impassively.

There are seventy two objects on the table that may be used on me as desired. I am the object. MARINA

There is a brief Hiatus in the action beneath her in response to this statement.

THERE WILL BE THREE WORKERS AND THREE PUNTERS. THE PUNTERS WILL MIGRATE BETWEEN LANDY AND MARINA'S SPACES. I WILL USE THE THREE WORKERS ALSO IN MARINA'S SPACE WITH A CHANGE OF COSTUME.

Wrangler denim jacket. WORKER 2

Glass tumbler WORKER 1

Hard back book;Observer guide to wild flowers. WORKER 3

Three punters two men and a woman enter Marinas space and read the sign.

One of them, a woman, stands in front of her and stares into her face.

The two men,pick up various objects and show them to each other.

I will give you this. LANDY PUNTER 1

No. MICHAEL LANDY

For the coat. LANDY PUNTER 1

Who sent you? MICHAEL LANDY

I read about what you are doing. LANDY PUNTER 1

Did my mother send you? MICHAEL LANDY

The stuff in the bag isn't worth much, but there is a blanket I had as a child. You can have it, for the coat. LANDY PUNTER 1

Stapler. WORKER 1

You shouldn't talk to him. WORKER 2

No, it's ok. It's kind of you. But no. MICHAEL LANDY

You should leave. WORKER 2

Leave him. MICHAEL LANDY

I would take care of it. LANDY PUNTER 1

I'm sure you would. MICHAEL LANDY

Why don't you sell everything and give the money to charity? LANDY PUNTER 2

Blue Woollen hiking socks used and darned. WORKER 3

That's been done? LANDY PUNTER 1

Has it? WORKER 3

Saint Francis? LANDY PUNTER 1

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1 She has beautiful eyes.	MARINA MALE PUNTER 1 (holding a hammer) How should we use this?
MARINA MALE PUNTER 2 Is there a nail?	MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1 I don't think she can see me. Can you see me? Can you hear me?
MARINA MALE PUNTER 1 There's nails here and a saw.	MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1 Why would you do this?
MARINA MALE PUNTER 1 Lipstick!	MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1 Who's looking after you?
MARINA MALE PUNTER 2 Perfume!	MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1 I will protect you. Stand in your penumbra, if you want me to.
MARINA MALE PUNTER 2 (pouring perfume onto her head) This will make her smell nice for her public.	MARINA MALE PUNTER 1 (painting a lipstick smile on her face.) I'll make her smile
MARINA MALE PUNTER 2 I could make her smile. I could make her scream.	MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1 Do you want me to?
LANDY PUNTER 2 It's a sin!	LANDY PUNTER 1 It's a gesture.
Spitting in the face WORKER 1 He's not.	LANDY PUNTER 2 of the poor. WORKER 2 He is.
It's a work of art!	WORKER 1

LANDY PUNTER 2 LANDY PUNTER 1
It's a waste. His fathers coat.

 WORKER 1
It will make people think!

 LANDY PUNTER 1
It won't. People don't think. Nobody cares.

 WORKER 2
He just wants to be famous.

 WORKER 1
Why are you here if you believe that?

 WORKER 2
For the money.

 WORKER 3
 (about to put in the
 shredder)
One oil painting by Jeffrey Peterson.

 LANDY PUNTER 2
Stop. How much is that worth?

 MICHAEL LANDY
Five thousand pounds.

 LANDY PUNTER 2
What good will it do to destroy it?

 MICHAEL LANDY
That's not for me to say.

 LANDY PUNTER 2 MARTIN LANDY
Somebody painted It's an idea.
that. Took time,
to make something
beautiful. To make
the world a better
place and now you
will destroy it.
To be clever. To
be well thought
of. Give it to me.

 LANDY PUNTER 2 MARTIN LANDY
So write it down The action is the
it's the same idea. Once it's
thing. done.

 LANDY PUNTER 1 MARTIN LANDY
If you destroy She did send you.
that coat you will
break your mothers
heart.

LANDY PUNTER 1

No I came.

MICHAEL LANDY

My father dug tunnels.
Then the earth fell in and broke him.
Then every step he took would hurt him.
He bought this coat when he was a young man.
He would wrap me up in it as a boy.
I would sit in his lap and peer out over his collar from
inside the coat. The smell of his cologne
and tobacco and leather and wool.
I felt like a prince.
Invulnerable.

WORKER 2

What would he make of this? The waste. The folly.

MICHAEL LANDY

That is my business.

LANDY PUNTER 1

Give me the coat.

MICHAEL LANDY

This is just a coat.
But it was my whole world.
It is all I have left of him.
When this is gone, it will last forever.
That has a price.
I will destroy every thing I possess.
People will know it. The idea will prevail.
His coat will be part of history.

LANDY PUNTER 1

What then? You sacrifice your fathers memory for Fame.
But are you going to live as a beggar?
Are you going to become a hermit, a hobo, a vagrant?

MARTIN LANDY

WORKER 1

I don't know what That's a lie!
I'll do.

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

Her gaze caresses me.
Lamb of God, Vishnu.
Christ on the cross
Monks burning on the street
A vessel for the sins of the world
Soft, yielding, containing, healing.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1 MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

(putting a thorny rose in her left hand and squeezing it shut)
A rose for a rose.

(cutting her clothing with a blade.)
Let's get a look at you.

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1
Let me brush your hair.
Cup your face in my hands.

She brushes Marina's hair as the man cuts off her clothing.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
A nipple! It looks sad.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
Let's cheer it up.

He applies lipstick to her nipple.

They have at this point completely cut away her shirt.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
She has a scar!

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
A star shaped scar!

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
Is she a Jew?

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
Or a witch?

They laugh.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
There's a chain here. What are you saying? You want to be a slave?

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
Wrap it around her neck.

Marina Male Punter 1 does so. He places it around her neck from behind suggesting a garrotte.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
(We hear his thoughts)
You have slender shoulders.
What burdens do you carry?

Am I failing your test?
 I could play to you
 Feed you
 Dress you
 Tickle you
 Bash you slash you
 Hold you paint you
 Wash you kosh you
 Look at me!

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

Leave her alone!

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

(holding a blade)

Why?

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

Don't cut her!

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

She wants us to!

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

That doesn't mean you should.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

(pointing at sign)

She has given us permission look!

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

You don't have to.
 You could embrace her.
 Look at her!

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1

She won't look at me.
 She's not really here.
 How dare she.
 She doesn't know me.

MARINA

(we hear her, the other
 characters do not, she sings
 this all through the
 following action)

I will be with you

Whatever you do

Eyes open

Present

Watching, feeling.

Stinging

Someone is combing my hair

There is pain in my leg

I smell Garlic

I'm afraid.

I am in a state of Grace

My hand is hurting me

The room feels tense

People are afraid

I'm lonely. Thirsty.

How long has it been?

They have pierced my skin

They are dividing.

A blade on my skin.

Cutting.

Those who wish to protect me

Those who wish to harm me.

I fear them.

I will not submit

I will eat the pain.

Take it, Bite down on it.

I defy you.

i am in a state of grace.

I am in a state of grace.

I am in the middle distance.

I am observing myself.

My core is strong

I am in a state of grace.

Bite down on it

Free my mind Free myself

free my body

my eyes water but I am not crying.

my face is leaking.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1

You are not looking at me.

But you see me.

(putting his face right up to
hers)

Let me smell your breath.
 Stale.
 Is your mouth dry?
 I could get you a drink
 There is a glass but no water
 Only alcohol, pure alcohol
 What about an apple?
 Would Eve like an apple?

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
 (spreading honey on her skin
 using the piece of wood)
 Sweets for the sweet
 We are being nice to you.
 Smile for us!
 No?
 Cut her.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
 Where?

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
 Make her smile.

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1
 Stop!
 Won't you help me?
 They will hurt her?

MARINA MALE PUNTER 3
 She can stop them, any time.

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1
 She won't. Just stand in their way,
 discourage them. They may not do it if we watch them,
 If they have to get past us.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 4
 I'll help.

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A SORT OF
 BALLET WITH THE PROTECTORS
 TRYING BUT FAILING TO PUT
 THEIR BODIES BETWEEN MARINA
 AND MALE PUNTERS 1 AND 2

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
 It's just honey. Look
 It must feel nice
 Oozing down her skin

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
 Read the sign this is what she wants.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 3
 Maybe it's a test?

She wants to be cut. MARINA MALE PUNTER 1

Was this why you came here? MARINA MALE PUNTER 3

I'm an artist, I came to see a work of art! MARINA MALE PUNTER 1

You are an artist? MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

Yes. MARINA MALE PUNTER 1

But you behave like this? MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

She is the brush I am the paint.
I will obey my impulses.
That is what she wants.
She wants us to debase ourselves.
To defile her. MARINA MALE PUNTER 1

You can't know that. MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

She put a hammer on the table!
And a nail
She wants us to use it on her.
I'm not the sick person in the room. MARINA MALE PUNTER 1

(to Marina)

Is this what you want?
Why would you want this?

She won't speak. MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

You asked for it. MARINA MALE PUNTER 1

He cuts into her skin with the razor
blade.

(as he starts cutting her)
Please, you are in the grip of something.
How will you face yourself in the morning.
There are many other objects why pick something to harm
her? MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
 I didn't pick it she did!
 I am the blade but she is guiding me.
 She is fully responsible for anything that happens.

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1
 The police might not think so.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
 As a rule the police do not involve themselves with avant
 garde art events. Ring them they'll think it's a joke.
 If you want to call someone call a psychiatrist. She took
 pills before. I read it. Maybe they made her crazy.

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 2
 Cut her face!

MARINA MALE PUNTER 3
 I won't let you do that.

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 2
 They won't do that.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 3
 You've cut her now put down the blade.

MARINA FEMALE PUNTER 1
 Please.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
 (Face close to Marina looking
 into her eyes)
 Touch my hand and I won't do it.
 Brush my knuckles
 with your fingers
 with your fingertips

He strokes her face.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 1
 Tears?
 Are you sad?
 Or in pain?
 No one here
 To comfort you.
 Touch me, and
 I won't cut your face.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
 Give me the blade, I'll fucking do it.

He takes the blade. Punter 3 steps
 between him and Marina.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
 Get out of my way.

Give me the blade. MARINA MALE PUNTER 3

If I do will you cut her? MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

No. MARINA MALE PUNTER 3

Then you don't need it. MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

Punter 3 weakens.

Please stop. MARINA MALE PUNTER 3

Get some balls and come back. MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

Punter 2 reaches out his arm and presses the Blade against Marina's face.

Everyone is still waiting for the blade to cut her. Punter 2 slowly drops his arm.

I won't cut her face. I'll cut her cunt. MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

BLACKOUT.

Act 2

JOESEPH BEUYS IS FOUND ON. HIS FACE IS COVERED IN GOLD LEAF
AND HE HOLDS A DEAD HARE. HE FACES THE AUDIENCE.

ABOVE HIM IS PROJECTED A SLIDE
SLIDE 1 "HOW TO EXPLAIN
PICTURES TO A DEAD HARE"

SLIDE 2 A PROJECTION OF NUMBER
FIVE BY JACKSON POLLACK

At the beginning of this piece Beuys
holds the Hare's legs and pretends to
walk them. Making cute hare noises.

JOESEPH BEUYS

A picture represents something in the world.
We see something in the world and we try to recreate it
within a frame. This frame is a rectangle. It measures
eight feet by four feet. These are human feet. Your feet
are smaller so it would appear larger to you. It was made
by a man called Jackson Pollack. From America. This is not
like some of the other things I will show you. Jackson may
not have seen this in the world. He may have seen it in his
head. He may only have seen it after he made it. I don't
know. Some people think it is beautiful. Some people think
it is very valuable. They will pay a lot of money for it.
Money is concentrated time. The picture is made up of lots
of different squiggles. Like the after image of a small
insect flying around in front of your little nose. There is
yellow and brown and grey. The yellow is the brightest, it
is the first thing you notice. When you get closer to the
picture it changes. You can see more colours. If you
smelled it, it would not smell of the earth. It would smell
of oily things and interior places.

SLIDE 3 A PROJECTION OF
OPHELIA BY JOHN EVERETT
MILLAIS

Did you have a wife?
Can a hare have a broken heart?
In some field does someone grieve you?
Will your beloved run amok through a meadow renting her fur
with her paws?
Or is she bundled up in her set weeping?
This is a picture of an imaginary woman.
She is floating in a stream.
She holds flowers in her hand.
When I look at this painting I feel..
She is beautiful for a human.
She is in grave danger. Close to death.
The water is a snare that will smother her.
No, no, don't be upset.
She is oblivious to her fate.
She is not real.

She will float in her madness long after you and I...
are dust.

SLIDE 4 POPE INNOCENT BY
VELASQUEZ

Beuys holds the Hare's head towards
the audience and makes a growling
noise.

This is a picture of a man wearing very beautiful garments.
When this man walked his garments would float in the air.
They would make a beautiful sound.
The light would shimmer on them as he moved.
He would look beautiful to all who looked upon him.
He does not wear these clothes to attract a mate.
It is a warning to the other males that he is in charge.

SLIDE 5 BIRTHDAY BY MARC
CHAGALL

This picture is called birthday.
It is not clear whose birthday it is.
The woman wears black.
The man floats above her and she kisses him.
His neck twists inelegantly back towards her
The table is only set for one person.
She kisses the air, her lips brush his ghostly face.
Do you see ghosts where you are now?
Are you hovering over me, or tickling my face with your
whiskers?

SLIDE 6 THE EXECUTION OF THE
DEFENDERS OF MADRID BY GOYA

The men on the left are singing a song
they are happy in their work
The men on the right are asking them to dance
the man lying on the ground is taking a rest
He has just eaten a cake and there is jam everywhere.
That is not the truth. I could tell you that this is a
picture of good and evil. But the men with the guns could
be good men. They just have to do this bad thing. They have
to kill the other humans for no good reason. They won't
even eat them. Or wear their skins.
I love you. I love your inert body.
I love your silent mouth.
I love your hollow eyes and your little white tail.
I am sorry you are dead.
There is beauty in the world. I am sorry that you can no
longer see it. My Love.

Black out.

Next part is a duet then three then
four voices simultaneously

FOR A FEW MOMENTS ALL WE HEAR
IS THE SOUND OF LE VA RUNNING
BACK AND FORTH. HIS MOVEMENT
HAS SLOWED SOMEWHAT SINCE THE
BEGINNING.

THE LIGHTS COME UP ON MARINA

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

I'll slit your clit.
Is that ok?
Who will stop me?
Put up your hand and take the reins.

MARINA

My fathers blood is in my veins.
He was a warrior, a killer.
Lived on grass in the woods.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

You don't think I can do it?
Come up with the goods?
I'm only following your orders

MARINA

My mother was right!
The world is full of monsters
She kept me in at night.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

You hold your tongue for spite
Dare me to be lower than I am
What good will come from this?
You can stop me with a kiss.

MARINA

Saints float above me in bliss.
Embalming encalming.
I will defy you with sanctity
Wrap you in sacred garments
anoint you with sacred oils
Bear you up to ecstasy
If only you will let me.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

No! I'll not be your Judas.
I want no more of this.

Stand here naked and bleeding!
There is no meaning
In what you're achieving

No one will remember this
What are you trying to posit;
that we are all gaolers in waiting?
Kapos and orderlies with a sacrifice.

MARINA

Just be present
this is a moment
when the dancer
is not the dance.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

Out there is the suffering
Out there are knaves and fools
Out there is sadness and pains
Peasants without choice
Hordes armed to the teeth
A world of grimness and vice
Wage slaves and beggars
Obedient clones and criminal ghouls
Out there chaos reigns.

You stand here naked and bleeding
There is no meaning in what you're achieving.

In here are dilettantes and spectators
Advocates and critics
Thinkers and teachers
Scribes painters academics
Soft hands and false smiles
Students and administrators
With ironic poise and solemn sighs
They validate your lies

You stand here naked and bleeding
There is no meaning in what you are achieving

Out there ridicule
In its lair
Panting
Licking its chops
Stalking and sniffing
the air

In here there is only bullshit
I want no more part of it.

He exits.

Landy is singing o a TV crew.

MICHAEL LANDY

This is just work.
I come here every day and shred my stuff
Destroy my history.
What I buy is my choice about what exists in the world.
I will bury every thing
Landy fill.
Every now and then a twinge. A Memory.
Like moving house. Reading books. Discovering objects I
thought I'd lost. Then shredding them. Pounding them to
dust. The object contains the memory. As it ceases to exist
in its original form it will take a part of my life with
it. A postcard from my first girlfriend. In a few days I
won't remember what she wrote. So that part of my life will
be gone.

JOURNALIST

You have a cat?

MICHAEL LANDY

Rats.

JOURNALIST

A cat called Rats, how wonderful!

MICHAEL LANDY

Yes.

JOURNALIST

What will happen Rats?

MICHAEL LANDY

I will grind him up with everything else.
(pause)
That's just a little joke.

JOURNALIST

And your girlfriend?

MICHAEL LANDY

A pet or a girlfriend aren't really possessions though are
they? They can leave whenever they want.

JOURNALIST

So you will still have your girlfriend.

MICHAEL LANDY

Yes. I hope i will. I might go mad after all this so you
never know.. But..

JOURNALIST

Maybe she won't want a man who has nothing?

MICHAEL LANDY

Maybe she won't.

Journalist and TV crew exit.

MICHAEL LANDY

I will always be this guy.
the guy off the tellie
who destroyed everything he owned.
a curiosity
a musuem piece.
Somebody sometime would have done it.
It just happened to be me.
I thought of it first.
What next?

ALL WORKERS

Where will this take you?
Your work has been destroyed.
Living your obituary.
What will the next guy do.
Hack off a limb?

MICHAEL LANDY

What will I have to do to prevail.
do I live in a barrell
not wash grow my beard
live as a hermit
forgo all of lifes comforts
turn my lover away
live without children
family

ALL WORKERS

Starve
 Thirst
 Flay your skin
 Kill your neighbour
 sell your kidneys
 eat shit
 list your sins
 atone
 attack
 take back
 your word
 Has it all been
 done
 shot
 cut
 starved
 bound
 branded
 burnt
 every
 orifice
 explored

MICHAEL LANDY

Nothing i can imagine
 will awaken a jaded mind
 are we to become a shamen
 generators of secular rituals
 for a world without Gods

ALL WORKERS

Why don't you just paint?

MICHAEL LANDY

Look around you
 the world is full of images.
 what will a painting add to that?
 I can photograph this ashtray
 from fifty different angles
 why would I paint it?
 how does a painting add to the sum of experiences in the
 world.
 What does a painting mean?

SOME WORKERS A

You're talking nonsense.
 Shredding your belongings is just clever
 it won't add anything to peoples lives.

SOME WORKERS B
 He's right. You can buy an object an idea belongs to everyone.
 once he has done this the idea is released into the world
 it is like a bacterium that will reproduce itself.
 it will turn up everywhere. It will change the world
 because no-one has done this before.

MICHAEL LANDY
 (to the tune of kristy mcoll)
 I don't want to change the world
 I'm not looking for a new England.

Pause

MICHAEL LANDY
 Joke.

SOME WORKERS A
 (carrying on as though the joke hasn't happened)
 What's wrong with owning something you can look at ?
 You think you're better than us!

MICHAEL LANDY
 What?

SOME WORKERS A
 You think you're special.

MICHAEL LANDY
 No I don't.

WORKER 1
 So why are you on a raised platform while we are all down here?

WORKER 2
 Why is your art better than anybody elses ?

MICHAEL LANDY
 It's not.

WORKER 2
 But you destroyed other peoples work to do this.

MICHAEL LANDY
 That doesn't mean..

WORKER 1
 Why are you up there and we are down here?

MICHAEL LANDY
 IT'S MY STUFF!
 I SPENT THREE YEARS MAKING THIS HAPPEN!
 STOP FUCKING WHINGING!

I AM DESTROYING ALL THE THINGS, THE THINGS, JUST THE THINGS
I VALUE. BUT THEY HAVE A VALUE. THIS IS, THIS IS, THIS
IS....
Not hard. No.
this is a ..
I'm up here because it was my idea and it's my stuff.
I am doing this, people will make of it what they will.

LANDY'S MUM

PLEASE STOP!

MICHAEL LANDY

Mum?

MARINA

Is this art?
Where am I in this?
My mother thinks I'm mad.
I am a grown woman
Standing in front of the world
Naked now
No protection in space
To her I am an errant child.
A savant a fool.
Mother walks outside me
So i don't run onto the road.
Mother sees danger in every room
In every breath.
Mother lays over me to catch the blow.
Mother salves my broken heart
Mother bandages my wounds
Mother strains against the pain.
Holding me inside her.
Mother lived on nuts and berries
Mother could kill with her bare hands.
Mother lays down the law.
Law I obey.
Mother scoffs. Nods. Complains.
Mother is my public.
Mother does not understand.
Mother says I am making a show of myself.
I am making a show of my self.
I am a show.
A holy show.

LANDY'S MUM

Your life is not your own.
There are other people in it.
These things are not just your things.
They have other people in them.

MICHAEL LANDY

Mum I asked you not to come.

LANDY'S MUM

Because I'm stupid? Because I don't understand?

You'll get upset.

MICHAEL LANDY

I won't. I am.

LANDY'S MUM

Upset?

MICHAEL LANDY

UPSET!

LANDY'S MUM

I'm working.

MICHAEL LANDY

This is work. Vandalism.
Spitting in the face of people who work for a living.
The proles who want things.
Around them
To remind them
That they have achieved.
Even bag-lady's have bags.
Are you better than all of that?
You don't need things to remind you who you are?
What happens at the end?

LANDY'S MUM

I'll be left with nothing.

MICHAEL LANDY

For a while.

LANDY'S MUM

Everything will be gone

MICHAEL LANDY

For a while.

LANDY'S MUM

What do you want?

MICHAEL LANDY

I want the coat.

LANDY'S MUM

You can't have it.

MICHAEL LANDY

It's mine.

LANDY'S MUM

You gave it to me.

MICHAEL LANDY

Give it back. LANDY'S MUM

Stop it mum. MICHAEL LANDY

Give me back the coat you little brat. LANDY'S MUM

Please! MICHAEL LANDY

What? LANDY'S MUM

This is hard. MICHAEL LANDY

You love it! LANDY'S MUM

What? MICHAEL LANDY

Up there everyone looking at you. You are a proper little notice box. LANDY'S MUM

This is my work. MICHAEL LANDY

Work? Give me the coat! LANDY'S MUM

I can't. MICHAEL LANDY

You come here. LANDY'S MUM
(pointing to one of the workers)

Me? WORKER 2

Yes. Wipe that smirk off your face. LANDY'S MUM

Sorry. WORKER 2

Have you seen a sheepskin coat? LANDY'S MUM

Yes. WORKER 2

Bring it to me there's	LANDY'S MUM
	a good boy.
Don't!	MICHAEL LANDY
Bring it to me	LANDY'S MUM
It belongs to me.	
Go back to work.	MICHAEL LANDY
Just bring it to me.	LANDY'S MUM
it belongs to me.	
Leave him alone.	MICHAEL LANDY
Then you get it!	LANDY'S MUM
Where are you going?	MICHAEL LANDY
I'm getting the coat.	WORKER 2
Get back to work!	MICHAEL LANDY
She wants the coat.	WORKER 2
Get back to work.	MICHAEL LANDY
She says it's hers!	WORKER 2
Get back to work!	MICHAEL LANDY
She's your mother.	WORKER 2
Get back to work!	MICHAEL LANDY
Are you calling her a liar?	WORKER 2
What?	MICHAEL LANDY

That's enough chat now
LANDY'S MUM
bring me the coat.

What did you say?
MICHAEL LANDY

Are you calling your own mother a liar?
WORKER 2

Who the fuck are you?
MICHAEL LANDY

I'm the guy your mother asked to get the coat.
WORKER 2

It's my coat.
MICHAEL LANDY

She says it's hers.
WORKER 2

She's mistaken.
MICHAEL LANDY

How do i know.
WORKER 2

It's on the inventory.
MICHAEL LANDY

It's my coat. My husband died. That was his coat.
LANDY'S MUM

You gave it to me.
MICHAEL LANDY

Prove it.
LANDY'S MUM

Mum!
MICHAEL LANDY

Have you a reciept?
LANDY'S MUM

Jesus.
MICHAEL LANDY

Have you?
WORKER 1

Get back to work we have to finish today.
MICHAEL LANDY

Bring me the coat it belongs to me.
LANDY'S MUM

MICHAEL LANDY
I have to destroy the coat mum.

LANDY'S MUM
It's not yours to destroy.

MICHAEL LANDY
I have to destroy the coat.

LANDY'S MUM
It was your fathers, he lives on in you.

MICHAEL LANDY
I have to destroy it.

LANDY'S MUM
It's his not yours.

WORKER 2
I have the coat. What will I do?

ALL WORKERS
Give it to her!

MICHAEL LANDY
If you give her the coat you won't get paid.

WORKER 2
What?

MICHAEL LANDY
Breach of contract. Pilfering or being an accessory to pilfering of Landy-billia.

WORKER 2
You'll fire me for giving your mother her coat?

MICHAEL LANDY
No, I'll fire you if you give my mother my coat.

WORKER 2
Why do you want it?

LANDY'S MUM
It was his fathers coat.
he loved it.
saved up every week for months
Then bought it.
I would slip my hands in side and he would hold me.
The smell of it.
Before he was even thought of.
He loved that coat.
he wanted his little boy to have it when he grew up
he would bequeath it to him.
A legacy.
A metaphor for my husbands life.
His struggle.

we worked like galley slaves to give him a better life.
 and this is what he does.
 everything else, I don't care. A perfectly good car.
 His paintings, clothes, gifts.
 I don't care, but this coat.
 This coat.
 This coat..
 His father
 His father.
 my husband
 a good man.
 shredded.
 he was shredded.
 you are shredding him again.
 shredding a good man.

WORKER 2
 (giving her the coat)

Here.

WORKER 1

No!

WORKER 2

Stop.

WORKER 1

No. It's not yours to give.

WORKER 2

Look at her.
 this isn't right.

WORKER 1

It's not for you to decide.
 This is art. You want to undo all the work we've done?
 The hours and days. His sacrifice.

WORKER 2

It's his mother!

WORKER 1

His mother, not yours. Put it back.

WORKER 2

What should I do?

MICHAEL LANDY

Put it back.
 Mother you should leave.
 I'll see you in a few days.
 I told you this would be hard>
 I told you to go away somewhere.
 Go to Spain.

Landy's mum rushes in to the space
 and grabs the coat.

Michael Landy grabs the coat from her grasp.

She slaps his face.

LANDY'S MUM

It's the same smell.
smell it!

MICHAEL LANDY

Please mum.

LANDY'S MUM

SMELL IT!

Michael landy smells the coat.

Inhaling deeply

When he is finished he looks at his mother.

MICHAEL LANDY

It's the same smell.

WORKER 1

If you give her the coat everyone will know.

WORKER 2

Leave him alone.

WORKER 1

None of the rest of it will mean anything.

WORKER 2

He knows.

WORKER 1

It's just a coat. You have destroyed love letters.
Paintings.

MICHAEL LANDY

Dad used to say there's a right way of doing everything.

LANDY'S MUM

You still have meDon't.

MICHAEL LANDY

He said you know the right way so don't do it the wrong way. A right way of painting a door. A right way of sweeping the floor. A right way of cooking breakfast. Building a wall. There is a right way of doing this. I'd like you to leave. I don't think you should be here when i destroy the coat. I'm sorry.

THE LIGHTING COMES UP ON BARRY
LE VA NOW. HE IS EXHAUSTED.

NEARING COLLAPSE. HE REACHES
THE MIDDLE OF HIS RUN AND
STOPS UNABLE TO GO ON. HE
SLOWLY TURNS TOWARDS THE
AUDIENCE AND SINGS ONE NOTE.

LANDY'S MUM

I don't have much left to me.

Two security guards have come over to
her and flank her.

MICHAEL LANDY

You still have me.

LANDY'S MUM

Come and see me in a few days. I'll cook you a dinner.

Landy's mum exits accompanied by the
two security guards.

Worker 2 hands landy the coat. He
holds it to him.

**Barry le Va begins to look at his
body. He fingers his bruises smears
blood on his forehead. Each action is
accompanied by a different note.**

ALL WORKERS

Destroy the coat!
shred it.
grind it to dust
and bury it.
take off your overalls
and your jockey shorts or smalls
remove any jewelry
and place it on the tray
It will be returned to you
in a different way.

BARRY LE VA

Bleeding, bruised, chipped, panting.
This will really hurt in the morning.
I am here now. This is my destination.
Every sinew injured pierced. Tortured.
I can feel the hairs on my body. My pores ache.
my teeth, my gums, my shins my toes. Purity.
flayed alive. I would drop things into spaces. Watch them
explode. Their insides flailing the spaces. Chaos inside
architectural spaces. Organic and inorganic matter colliding
and blending. There is grace in chaos. The arcs of a
droplet of water are balletic. Beauty in a ripple. What
beauty is contained within me now? What shockwaves still
flow through my body? Spreading through my bones.

Radiating -out through my skin into the world. Into the evening traffic.

MARTINA

Nearly there now. Bleeding bruised stitched besmirched. The mob has soiled me. My body is here but were am I? If I died would I die here? I am radiating goodness. I am radiating goodness. They will not defile me. Bite the pain. Bite it. Down on it. They cannot pierce my..They cannot pierce my... What? Cannot pierce my what? Soaring above them now, sweating on them, dripping sweat on them, I'm not here I'm there.

MICHAEL LANDY

All that's left to do is do it.
 Remove my clothes place them on the tray.
 send them to the machine.
 This I will do myself.
 I feel calm, another day at the office. When this is over
 the world will be the same. I will still eat and drink,
 make love and stink. There will still be a McDonald's and a
 Boots. I will go to a shop and buy stuff. I will have
 another car. I will make new art. Everything i have is
 gone. Except me. Except me. And them. And them. To do it
 properly should i disown my friends and family. Like a
 twelve step programme backwards. Instead of making amends.
 The opposite. Alienate and disgust people so they will
 disown me. Or write to them. Give them a list of their
 faults and flaws. Dig deep to wound them. Then go into the
 world naked and alone. Friendless faithless orphaned
 wretched. Or dead. Chris burden took a bullet in the arm
 should I take one in the head. A thin line between art and
 insanity. I'm tired; my mother upset me. I'll just hold him
 one last time.

BARRY LE VA

Towards the wall. Anticipation of impact. Then thud. And
 run run run run run run run run run run run run run run run run
 run run run and thud. Dribble. Bleeding early. Burst the
 sack. Cracked the skin. Sweat and snot on my chinny chin
 chin. Piss down my leg. Then freedom. Space. Distant.
 Astral. Then thud. Thud. Breath on breath. Pace on pace.
 Thirst. Gums bleeding. Bit my tongue. Can't see. Colours.
 Stars swimming in my.. Chafing. Buttocks raw. Anus aches.
 Diarrhoea dribble. Toenails loose. Teeth. Losing my teeth?
 loose in my head. Organs shaken. Liver heavy and bleeding.
 Lungs adhering. Brain bruised. Tongue thick. Dry and
 coated. Leaping floated and collided bloated and soft.
 Road kill. Raccoons or skunks. Breathing hurts. Living
 hurts. Life hurts. My heart aches. Boom boom ow. Boom boom
 ow. Boom boom ow. I have played myself outside and in. Like
 a slug in a salt cellar. I should shut up. Every phrase
 hurts. Every thought is a sliver of agony.

I'm back.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

He goes to the table and gets the gun and the bullet. He holds the gun in his right hand and the bullet in his left hand.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

This is what you have in mind isn't it.

MARINA

Bite it.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

You want to go down in history!

MARINA

Bite down on it.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

Well so do I.

ALL MARINA PUNTERS

Oh my god he's got a gun.

MARINA

Bite the pain.

ALL MARINA PUNTERS

He's got a gun.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

Yes. I place the bullet in the chamber and spin it. Where is the bullet. Do you want to find out?

ALL MARINA PUNTERS

Stop him.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

Will you stop me? Who will stop me?

Pointing with the gun.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

Will you? Where is the man with no balls? Will you?

ALL PUNTERS

He's mad.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2

I'm not. These were on the table. I'm merely following her orders. She takes full responsibility don't you!

MARINA

Saints float above me in bliss.
Embalming encalming.

I will defy you with sanctity
 Wrap you in sacred garments
 anoint you with sacred oils
 Bear you up to ecstasy
 If only you will let me.

ALL MARINA PUNTERS
 Someone should stop this. You should stop this. Say stop
 and he'll stop.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
 Yes say stop and I'll stop

ALL MARINA PUNTERS
 Say stop and he'll stop.

Pause

He cocks the gun and puts it to her
 head.

MARINA MALE PUNTER 2
 Say stop and i'll stop.

ALL MARINA PUNTERS
 I will defy you with sanctity.

He opens her mouth and puts the gun
 in her mouth.

ALL LANDY WORKERS.
 Everything must go. Everything must go.
 we have tabulated and quantified
 everything must go.

Micahel hands the coat to one of the
 workers.

ALL LANDY PUNTERS
 Grind it.
 Grind it to dust
 Then it is done and we can get paid and go home.

Michael stands naked and watches the
 coat being ground to dust.

MICHAEL LANDY
 This is a rush. This is a rush. This is a rush.

BARRY LE VA
 I can't go on.

MARINA
 Decide.

Barry le Va falls off his raised
 position out of sight.

Stop.

ALL MARINA PUNTERS

The rest of the marina punters grab
the man with the gun. He limply
allows the gun to be taken from him.

There is a sudden lighting change and
evrybody except Michael and Marina
leave the stage.

Pause.

Act3

EPILOGUE

An assistant to Marina, with peroxide blonde hair, comes on with a first aid kit, a jug of water and a blanket. Marina acts as though she has had a million cups of coffee.

MARINA

Did you see that? Did you? Did you see that? The gun? He loaded the gun. He did . Didn't he? He loaded it?

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

Yes, I think so.

MARINA

He did. I know guns. I heard the mechanism. Heard it chamber. Who was he? Did you see him? There were others. I should have known. I should have. I knew. I think I knew. Did I know? Did I? Did I say?

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

You should drink.

MARINA

Yes. Mmmmm, this is great, is there more?

Assistant goes to get more water.

MARINA

I was here. The whole time. Not for a second. Present. I was present. I heard everything. Jesus. Aagghhhh. He looked right into my eyes. I saw him. Really saw him. He couldn't see me. I nearly died. I nearly died. I thought he could do it. He could do it. He could do it. I was waiting. Like that photo. In sixty eight. The prisoner. Grimacing. I heard the bullet chamber. Do you know the photo? The man like this? The gun at his head. Waiting. Waiting for the shock. The blast. Waiting for oblivion. Impact.

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

Here.

MARINA

Thanks. Who stopped it?

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

I don't know. I didn't. It just stopped.

MARINA

What are you doing?

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

First aid.

MARINA

You are kind. Take out the stitches I won't feel anything.

Stretcher bearers enter and begin to attend to Barry le Va.

MARINA

I could feel them. When they came in. I knew. Knew what they would do. I tried to reach them. Some of them were bright. Others dark. He had nothing. He was a coward. A man would have shot me. After picking up the gun. Putting it in my mouth. Maybe he's dead now. Like Judas hanging from a tree. I'm babbling forgive me.

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

I'm used to it.

MARINA

Yes you are. Who was here? Was anyone here? The photo's. The photo's. I won't look at them. My god. God. God. I think I knew. I think I did. But I didn't understand. Now I do. Were you afraid? I could smell fear. I have smelt it before. I could sense it. was it you? I was open. Open. Ouch. Sorry that stung a little. Is it deep. Will it leave a scar. I don't mind. Did they use everything?

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

I don't know.

MARINA

I had a crown of thorns. I was bathed in oils. They got t. They understood. Someone prayed. I heard praying. I'm hungry. There are sandwiches ? Sweet meats? I want champagne.

All this time Michael Landy has been standing still his private parts covered by his hands.

A BBC TV crew arrives.

BBC1

Sorry we're late. We got the end bit. I was on another gig. I brought some underpants and some stuff, would you like them?

MICHAEL LANDY

Yeah, thanks.

BBC1

So.

MICHAEL LANDY

So.

My head hurts.

BARRY LE VA

What do you fucking expect?

STRETCHER BEARER 1

The bastards. The bastards. Was it just the men? No. Something on my back.

MARINA

Yes.

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

She cut me.

MARINA

Yes.

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

She wasn't the only one. Bitches. Bitches.

MARINA

Does that hurt?

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

No. There were two camps. Civil war.

MARINA

More good than bad.

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

More good than bad. But no one shouted stop til the end.

MARINA

They did. They tried. But the gun. You knew that.

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

I did. I did. I did. I knew that. I thought. Maybe. No. I was right. Barbarians. The sphinx's nose. The library at Alexandria. Desecration comes naturally to them.

MARINA

Italians?

ASSISTANT TO MARINA

Everyone.

MARINA

What would you like to do first?

BBC1

I don't know. Shoes?

MICHAEL LANDY

BBC1
I brought flip flops. Can we turn on the camera? Before you get dressed?

MICHAEL LANDY
Yes.

BBC1
Ok? Michael landy. You have destroyed everything you own, how do you feel?

MICHAEL LANDY
I feel great. I feel light as air I feel free. Naked. Rich. I feel rich. Like I'm coming out of hospital into the real world. I'll have to face the real world.

BBC1
Where will you go?

MICHAEL LANDY
To my girlfriends house.

STRETCHER BEARER 1
Can you stand?

MICHAEL LANDY
She is taking me in.

BBC1
Do you want to go shopping now?

MICHAEL LANDY
Maybe tomorrow.

BBC1
Maybe you could buy just one thing?

MICHAEL LANDY
I can't think of anything I want.

BBC1
But there are things you need.

MICHAEL LANDY
A toothbrush?

BARRY LE VA
Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck.

He stands with great difficulty.

STRETCHER BEARER 1
You get paid to do this?

BARRY LE VA
No.

STRETCHER BEARER 1
Twiddle your fingers, like this.

BBC2
Could we get a shot of the piles of detritus.

MICHAEL LANDY
Sure go ahead.

BBC2
What is going to happen to them.

MICHAEL LANDY
They'll go to Landfill.

BBC2
Landyfill.

MICHAEL LANDY
Landyfill yes. Good one. Good pun.

BBC1
I thought you were going to sell it.

MICHAEL LANDY
I was. Changed my mind. Everything must go.

BBC1
Go.

MICHAEL LANDY
Nothing must have a use. I don't want to see bits of my old passport in someone's living room in five years.

BBC1
Has it changed you?

MICHAEL LANDY
Too early to tell.
I'm an artifact now.
I'm un-tethered
I'm the corollary of capitalism.
My revolution is over
I must govern my life as best I can.

BBC1
You're not tempted to live

BBC2
Like kermit.

BBC1
Kermit?

BBC2
Like a hermit.

Naked in a shed.
MICHAEL LANDY
Sort of thing.
BBC2
MICHAEL LANDY
No. This was a work of art not a lifestyle statement.

BARRY LE VA
I wanted to test myself.
MICHAEL LANDY
I wanted to test myself
MARINA
I wanted to test myself.
BBC1
So what will you do next?
MICHAEL LANDY
I have no idea what to do next.
I have been imagining this moment for years.
What it would feel like.
To walk out into the world with nothing.
Just to be. Imagining no possessions.
I just want to wallow in it for a while.
Feel its power.

BBC1
But you'll come shopping.
You need some things.
MICHAEL LANDY
Yes. I need some things.
STRETCHER BEARER 1
Do you do this for a living?
BARRY LE VA
I'm an artist.
STRETCHER BEARER 1
So somebody paid you?
BARRY LE VA
No. I just did it.
STRETCHER BEARER 1
Why?

BARRY LE VA
To see what it would be like.

STRETCHER BEARER 1
What's that noise?

BARRY LE VA
That's the sound of me crasing into the wall over and over again.

STRETCHER BEARER 1
Jesus. Jesus. How long did it go on for?

BARRY LE VA
A long time.

STRETCHER BEARER 1
Do you want something for pain?

BARRY LE VA
No. I want to feel it.

STRETCHER BEARER 1
Are you sure?

BARRY LE VA
Yes. I'm feeling it, I'm really feeling it.

MARINA
I'm starving. Did you book the restaurant?

ASSISTANT TO MARINA
Yes. Shouldn't you see a doctor.

MARINA
My darling, my parents were warriors, these are just scratches. We shall have a feast. I will eat for my ancestors. I'll eat for everyone who cannot eat. I must ring my mother. She'll be worried.

ASSISTANT TO MARINA
Very well.

MARINA
(pause)
I don't want to leave. Let me be here alone. Leave the things.

(all but Marina exit her space)

It's just a room
But it will define me.
I understand now.
What power is.
What loss is.
What hope is.

What need is.
What I am.
What they are.

BBC1

Can we get a shot of you putting on your underpants next to some of your dust?

MICHAEL LANDY

Ok ? I feel i should say a prayer.

BBC2

Shorts or briefs? We have both?

MICHAEL LANDY

God bless the licence payer.

BBC2

Amen.

MICHAEL LANDY

Will I face you?

BBC2

Yes we can pixelate your penis if we have to. You can say something if you like. Something Profound?

MICHAEL LANDY

This is a new beginning.
I will re create my world purchase by purchase. Rebuilding my life from the ground.

BBC2

What will you miss? The most.

MICHAEL LANDY

Photo's, old clothes, .

BBC2

Sweater?

MICHAEL LANDY

(putting on sweater)

I really liked my car.

BBC2

Was there a moment when you stopped acquiring things? Because you knew, it would go on the list.

MICHAEL LANDY

Yes, when we finished the inventory. That was it.

BBC2

Jeans

MICHAEL LANDY

(putting on jeans)

It was like moving house.

It always took me a long time.
 Packing. I would sit down and look through old books,
 notebooks, photographs.
 I feel something now. A twinge of loss.
 Some understanding.
 They were only things.
 But they were my things.
 My little face squinting in the sun.
 My crumbs on the mat.
 My paint on a sleeve.
 My sketches.
 My plain white ceramic coffee mug.
 My works.
 My memories.
 My life lived.
 My imprint on the world.
 My dust.
 My quintessence of dust.

BBC2

Are you crying? Would you like to cry. You should cry if
 you want to.

MICHAEL LANDY

No.
 Just a twinge.
 It's gone now.
 I'm ok.
 I'm ready.

BBC2

What have you got left?

MICHAEL LANDY

Other than what I'm wearing;
 Nothing, literally nothing.
 Less than nothing.
 I'm in debt.
 I have somewhere to go.
 I have family.
 Relationships.
 I have love.
 In me and around me.
 Some food in my belly.
 Air in my lungs.
 Thoughts in my head.
 My health.
 Memories.
 Knowledge.
 My education.
 My reputation.
 Some fame.
 I'll be on Telly.

STRETCHER BEARER 1

What is beautiful about that?

Nothing.

BARRY LE VA

STRETCHER BEARER 1
You said it was art. It should be beautiful.

BARRY LE VA
Look at me. Am I beautiful?

STRETCHER BEARER 1
You're all fucked up.

BARRY LE VA
If you were here earlier, what would you have seen?

STRETCHER BEARER 1
What you said. That. That.

BARRY LE VA
If you were here, what would you have thought?

STRETCHER BEARER 1
Same as I think now.

BARRY LE VA
But if you were here?

STRETCHER BEARER 1
I don't see what you're..

BARRY LE VA
Look at me!

STRETCHER BEARER 1
Fine.

BARRY LE VA
What do you feel?

STRETCHER BEARER 1
Angry. I feel angry.
This is bull shit.
I see real people
Ripped to shreds in car crashes.
You do this.
For fun.
To make your self
Big
And clever.
It's just stupid.
Just because you are
in pain now.
That makes you special?
Pain is the most ordinary thing in the world.
Pain is in every filthy crevice of this city.
On every face.
In every utterance.

There is a universe of pain
in every living thing.
What makes yours special?

It's mine. I made it. BARRY LE VA

Then a B-52 is a work of art. STRETCHER BEARER 1
Or a drunk driver.
A rapist, Son of sam.
Get a job.

Are you going to come with us? STRETCHER BEARER 2
you will need an x ray.

At least. STRETCHER BEARER 1

Ok. I'll come. BARRY LE VA

The stretcher bearers tenderly help
in on to the stretcher and exit.

You are happy? ASSISTANT TO MARINA

Yes. MARINA

It went well? ASSISTANT TO MARINA

Yes. MARINA

Ulay called. ASSISTANT TO MARINA

Good. MARINA

He wanted to know you were ok. ASSISTANT TO MARINA

I am. MARINA

Are you ready to start shopping? BBC1

No. But I will. MICHAEL LANDY

The end.

APPENDIX 2

***Breakdown* libretto**

Final Version

Appendix 2 contains the final version of the libretto for *Breakdown*. It is presented here exactly as it appears in the opera.

Breakdown

Libretto

Characters (in order of appearance)

- W1** = Landy worker 1, a worker facilitating and aiding in the destruction of Landy's possessions.
- W2** = Landy worker 2, a worker facilitating and aiding in the destruction of Landy's possessions.
- W3** = Landy worker 3, a worker facilitating and aiding in the destruction of Landy's possessions.
- Lan** = Michael Landy, a performance artist destroying all his possessions in the window of a shop in London's Oxford Street
- Mar** = Marina Abramović, performance artist
- MA** = Marina Assistant
- LP1** = Landy punter 1. A member of the public attending Landy's event in London
- LP2** = Landy punter 2. A member of the public attending Landy's event in London
- MFP1** = Marina Female Punter 1. A member of the public attending Marina's event in Turin.
- MMP1** = Marina Male Punter 1. A member of the public attending Marina's event in Turin.
- MMP2** = Marina Male Punter 2. A member of the public attending Marina's event in Turin.
- MMP3** = Marina Male Punter 3. A member of the public attending Marina's event in Turin.
- MFP2** = Marina Female Punter 2. A member of the public attending Marina's event in Turin.
- JB** = Joseph Beuys, performance artist.
- Mo** = Michael Landy's mother.
- Jour** = A journalist interviewing Michael Landy about his work.
- Wkrs** = All three of Land's assistants.
- BLV** = Barry le Va, performance artist.
- OMPs** = Other Marina punters.
- CTs** = Chorus tenders.
- OCs** = Other chorus (not tenders)

ACT 1

The stage is divided into three spaces; two clearly defined spaces down stage which look like an empty shop space and a gallery space respectively. The gallery has a table in it on which is placed a large amount of seemingly unrelated objects. In the shop space there is a large machine for grinding. Upstage there is an empty gallery space that takes up the entire width of the stage. There is nothing in it. A man enters this upstage gallery. He busies himself setting up a video camera. When he is happy with its position he turns it on. At this point he walks to one side of the gallery. He waits for a few moments and then he starts to run. He runs without slowing down until he hits the wall on the other side of the gallery. As he hits the wall the music for scene 1 begins.

SCENE 1

A shop front on Oxford Street in London.

W1: Everything must go

W2: Everything must go

W3: Everything must go

All 3: We have tabulated and quantified. All his things must go.

W1: Everything must go

W2: Everything must go

W3: Everything must go

W1: Airfix models, spitfires

W2: Shirts from oxfam

W3: Jockey shorts from BHS

W2: Pyjamas from Oxfam

W1: All his vinyl records

W2: Stamp collection too

W1 & W3: Old love letters, concert tickets

W2: and presents from his mam

All 3: A Saab 911!

W1: Everything must go

W2: Everything must go

W3: Everything must go

W1: A Spandau Ballet poster

W3: Moccasins from Guam....

W2: A wok

W3: and a plastic mack

All 3: All that he has and all that he is we'll grind to dust in a sack.

W2: He'll be left with nothing

W3: Standing naked on the floor.

W2: We get eight fifty an hour.

All 3: Could a student ask for more?
Everything must go.

W3: Catalogues and programmes

W2: Seeds and jeans

W1: Prophylactics

W3: Anatomy books

W2: and magic tricks

W3: Ergonomic footstool

W2: Camp bed and.....

W1: A telescope (*interrupting*)

W2: a coffee maker

W1 & W3: biscuit tins

W1 & W2: and a skipping rope

All 3: Passport, birth cert, bankbook, credit card, drivers license, everything must go!

W1: Why doesn't he give it away?

W2: It's against the rules

W1: I could use a coat like that.....

W2: You don't do something like this....

W1: and the car!

W2: and cheat. London Calling single.

W3: Desktop calculator

W1: Is he going to kill himself in the end?

W2: No.

W3: Then he's not really destroying everything is he?

W2: His possessions.

W3: He owns his life.

W2: He can't do anything illegal.

W1: What's wrong with you? Look at him. This is hard for him.

W2: Dinky toy, red bread van.

Attention shifts to Marina Abramović's space

A gallery in Turin

Mar: There are seventy two objects on the table that may be used on me as desired. I am the object.

W3: Wrangler denim jacket

W1: Observer guide to wild flowers

W2: Glass tumbler.

Light goes down on the Landy workers

MA: Where did you get them

Mar: I bought them

MA: So they are not....

Mar: special? No. They are just things that I bought. They have no meaning outside this room.

MA: (seeing the knife) You want them to hurt you?

Mar: I want them to make the choice. I want to create a space in them. I want that space to be filled with something new. I want to know what it's like to have them hurt me.

MA: You want me to photograph that, people hurting you?

Mar: I want you to record what happens. Just that. Don't interpret. Your photographs should be mundane compositions.

MA: How will I know it's over?

Mar: You'll know. (Pause) My mother tried to kill me. Someone rang her at home, said I was hanging naked from the ceiling at the gallery. She threw a heavy crystal ashtray at my head. It occurred to me I could just let it smash my skull to see what it's like. But how to come back? So I moved my head.

MA: What about the gun?

Mar: They won't use the gun.

MA: And the bullet?

Mar: What use is a gun without a bullet.

General hub-bub as the public enter Marina's performance space. Focus switches to Landy's shop.

LP1: I will give you this....

Lan: No.

LP1: for the coat

Lan: Who sent you?

LP1: I read about what you are doing.

Lan: Did my mother send you?

LP1: (ignoring the question) The stuff in the bag isn't worth very much, but there's a blanket I had as a child. You can have it for the coat.

Lan: It's kind of you but no.

W2: You shouldn't talk to him.

W1: You should leave.

Lan: Leave him.

LP1: I would take care of it.

Lan: I'm sure you would

LP2: Why don't you sell everything and give the money to charity?

W3: Blue woolen hiking socks.

W1: That's been done.

W3: Has it?

W1: Saint Francis.

Back to Marina's space

MFP1 stands close to Marina while MMP1&2 explore what's on the table

MFP1: She has beautiful eyes. I don't think that she can see me. Can you see me? Can you hear me? She has beautiful eyes.

MMP1: (picks up a hammer from the table) How should we use this?

MMP2: Is there a nail?

MMP1: (looks for nails) There's nails here and a saw

MMP2: How should we use this?

MMP1&2: How should we use this?

MFP1: (turning her attention to the men at the table) Why would you do this. (to Marina) Who is looking after you?

MMP2: Lipstick!

MMP1&2: How should we use this? How should we use this?

MFP1: I will stand in your penumbra if you want me to.

MMP1: Perfume!

MMP1&2: How should we use this? How should we use this?

MFP1

I will protect you if you want me to. Do you want me to? She has beautiful eyes.

MMP1

I could make her smile. I could make her scream.

MMP2

This will make her smell nice for her public.

MMP1 draws a smile on Marina's face with the lipstick
End of scene

Barry le Va runs once more and hits the other wall.

ACT 1 SCENE 2

LP2: It's a sin.

LP1: It's a gesture.

LP2: Spitting in the face of the poor.

W3: It's a work of art.

LP2: It's a waste.

LP1: His father's coat.

W3: It will make people think.

LP1: People don't think. Nobody cares.

W2: He just wants to be famous.

W1: Why are you here if you believe that?

W2: For the money.

W3: One oil painting by Jeffrey Peterson

LP2: Stop! *(To Landy)* How much is that worth?

Lan: Five thousand pounds.

LP2: What good will it do to destroy it?

Lan: That's not for me to say.

LP2: Somebody painted that. Took time to make it beautiful.

Lan: It's an idea

LP2: So write it down. It's the same thing.

Lan: The action is the idea. Once it is done.

LP1: If you destroy that coat it will break your mother's heart.

Lan: She did send you. My father dug tunnels, then the earth fell on him and broke him. Then every step he took would hurt him. My father dug tunnels, then the earth fell in. He would wrap me in it as a boy. The smell of his cologne and tobacco and leather and wool...I felt like a prince. I felt invulnerable.

W3: What would he make of this.

Lan: That is my business.

LP1: Give me the coat.

Lan: This is just a coat, but it is my whole world. When this is gone, it will last forever.
This coat will be part of history. This has a price. I will destroy everything I possess.
People will know it. The idea will prevail.

FINALE ACT 1

Back in Marina's space

MFP1: Her gaze caresses me. Lamb of God, Vishnu. Christ on the cross, monks burning on the street, a vessel for the sins of the world. Soft, yielding, containing, healing.

MMP1: (*presses a thorny rose into Marina's hand, squeezing it shut*) A rose for a rose.

MMP2: Let's get a look at you. (*he cuts her clothing with the blade from the table*)

MMP1: A nipple! It looks sad.

MMP2: Let's cheer it up.

MFP1: Let me brush your hair, cup your face in my hands.

MMP2: He applies lipstick to her nipple.

MMP1: She has a scar!

MMP2: A star shaped scar!

MMP1: Is she a jew?

MMP2: Or a witch? (*They laugh*)

MMP1: There is a chain here. What are you saying? You want to be a slave?

MMP2: Wrap it around her neck.

MMP1 places it around her neck from behind suggesting a garrotte.

MMP1: You have slender shoulders. What burdens do you carry?

MFP1

Her gaze caresses me. Lamb of God, Vishnu. Christ on the cross, monks burning on the street, a vessel for the sins of the world. Soft, yielding, containing, healing.

MMP1

Her gaze caresses me. A vessel for the sins of the world. Soft, yielding.

MMP1: Am I failing your test? I could play to you. Feed you. Dress you. Tickle you. Bash you slash you hold you paint you wash you kosh you...Look at me!

MFP1: (to MMP2 who is holding a blade) Don't hurt her. Leave her alone.

MMP2: Why? She has given us permission (pointing at sign), look!

MFP1
You don't have to. You could
embrace her. Look at her!

MMP1
She won't look at me. (to Marina)
Look at me! How dare she. She
doesn't know me.

MMP2
She wants us to!

MMP1: Let me smell your breath. Stale. Is your mouth dry? I could get you a drink. Only
alcohol, pure alcohol.

MMP1
What about an apple? Would Eve like an apple?

MMP2
Sweets for the sweet? We are
being nice to you.

MMP2: Smile for us! Smile for us! No? Then cut her!

MMP1: Where?

MMP1: Anywhere.

MFP1: Stop! *(she turns to others in the crowd)* Won't you help me? They will hurt her.

MMP3: She could stop them any time.

MFP1: She won't. Just stand in their way

Others present try to get in between Marina and MMP1&2

MMP1: She want's to be cut.

MFP1 and MMP3
Was this why you came here?

MMP1 and MMP2
She wants to be cut

MMP1: I am an artist. I came to see a work of art.

MFP1 and MMP3: You are an artist yet you behave like this?

MMP1: She is the brush I am the paint. I will obey my impulses. She wants us to debase
ourselves. To defile her.

MFP1: You can't know that.

MMP1: She put the hammer on the table! And a nail. She wants us to use it on her. I'm not
the sick person in the room. *(to Marina)* Is this what you want?

OTHERS: She won't speak

MMP1: Why would you want this?

OTHERS: She won't speak. She will not speak.

MMP1: You asked for it. (*He makes a cut on her arm*)

MFP1: Ah! please, you are in the grip of something.

MMP1: I am the blade, but she is guiding me. She is fully responsible for anything that happens

MFP1: The police might not think so.

MMP1: Ring them. They'll think it's a joke. I read she took pills before. Maybe they made her crazy.

MMP2: Cut her face:

MMP3: I won't let you do that.

MFP2: They won't do that.

MMP3: You've cut her. Now put down the blade.

MFP1: Please.

MMP1: Touch my hand and I won't do it. Brush my knuckles with your fingers, with your fingertips and I won't do it. Tears? Are you sad? Or in pain? No one here to comfort you. Touch me and I won't cut your face. Touch me. Touch me. Touch me!

MMP2: Give me the blade (*takes the blade*). I'll cut her face!

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

Scene 1

Joseph Beuys whose head is covered in gold leaf enters with a dead hare. He uncovers a picture and starts explaining it to the dead animal. After each picture is explained he uncovers another. This all happens downstage in front of the other action.

JB: *Picture 1: Number 5 by Jackson Pollock*

A picture represents something in the world. We see something in this world and we try to recreate it within a frame. This frame is a rectangle. It measures eight feet by four feet. These are human feet. Your feet are smaller so it would appear larger to you. It was made by a man named Jackson Pollock from America. This is not like some of the other things I will show you. Some people think it is beautiful. They'll pay a lot of money for it. Money is concentrated time.

Picture 2: Ophelia by John Everett Millais

Did you have a wife? Can a hare have a broken heart? In some field does someone grieve you? Will your beloved run amok through a meadow rending her fur with her paws? Or is she bundled up in her set weeping? This is a picture of an imaginary woman. She is floating in a stream. She holds flowers in her hand. When I look at the painting I feel she is beautiful for a human. She is in grave danger close to death the water's a snare that will smother her. No, no, don't be upset. She's oblivious to her fate. She is not real. She will float in her madness long after you and I are dust.

Picture 3: Birthday by Mark Chagall

This picture's called birthday. It is not clear whose birthday it is. The woman wears black. The man floats above her and she kisses him. His neck twists inelegantly towards her. The table's only set for one person. She kisses the air, her lips touch his ghostly face. Do you see ghosts where you are now? Are you hovering over me, or tickling my face with your whiskers?

Picture 4: The Executors of the Defenders of Madrid by Goya

The men on the left are singing a song. The men on the right are asking them to dance. The man on the ground is taking a rest. He has just eaten a cake and there is jam everywhere. This is not the truth. I could tell you that this is a picture of good and evil, but the men with the guns could be good men. They just have to do this bad thing. They have to kill the other humans. They won't even eat them. Or wear their skins. I love you I love your inert

body and your silent mouth. I love your hollow eyes and your little white tail. There is beauty in this world. I'm sorry that you can no longer see it. My love.

He exits. We see le Va continue to run, flinging himself at the wall.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

MMP2 still has not cut Marina. The scene has lost the look of reality. Marina is isolated by a light, as is MMP2. The ensemble look on at the scene with horror and although Marina sings they remind us that she is silent.

MMP2: Will cut you witch. Is that OK? Who will stop me? You hold your tongue for spite, dare me to be lower than I am. What good can come of this? You can stop me with a kiss. You don't think I can do it come up with the goods? I'm only following orders. What good will come of this? No one will remember this, there is no meaning. Don't think I can't do it, come up with the goods. You can stop me with a kiss.

Mar: *(to herself)* My mother was right, the world is full of monsters. Just be present just be present.

OTHERS:

My mother was right.

She won't speak.

MMP2: No, I'll not be your Judas. I want no part of this.

Mar: Saints float above me in bliss, embalming, encalming. I will defy you with sanctity, wrap you in sacred garments, anoint you in sacred oils, Bare you up in ecstasy.

OTHERS: She won't speak.

Mar: My mother was right. She kept me in at night. My mother was right. The world is full of monsters.

MMP2: Out there is suffering, out there is sadness and pain. Peasants without choice, wage slaves and beggar hoards armed to the teeth, world full of grimness and vice. Out there chaos reigns. In here are dilettantes, thinkers and teachers with ironic poise and solemn sighs. They validate your lies. Out there, ridicule in it's lair, panting, licking it's chops, stalking and sniffing the air.

OTHERS: She won't speak.

MMP2: In here is only bullshit. I want no part of it. *(He exits)*

ACT 2 SCENE 3

Lan: This is just work. I come here every day and shred my stuff. Destroy my history. Every now and then a twinge. A memory.

Jour: You have a cat?

Lan: Rats

Jour: A cat called 'rats'. How wonderful.

Lan: Yes.

Jour: What will happen to Rat?

Lan: I'll grind him up with everything else. *(pause)* That's just a little joke.

Jour: And your girlfriend?

Lan: A pet or a girlfriend aren't really possessions are they? They can leave whenever they want.

Jour: So you'll still have a girlfriend? Maybe she won't want a man who has nothing.

Lan: Maybe she won't.

Jour:
Maybe she won't want you

Lan:
Maybe she won't

Lan: I will always be the guy off the telly who destroyed everything he owned. A curiosity. A museum piece. Somebody sometime would have done it. It just happened to be me.

Wkrs: Where will this take you? Your work has been destroyed. What will the next guy do, hack off a limb? Why don't you just paint?

Lan: Look around you. The world is full of images. What would a painting add to that? I can photograph this ashtray from forty different angles. Why should I paint it?

Wkrs: Starve, thirst, flay your skin, kill your neighbour, sell your kidney, eat crap, list your sins, atone, attack...What's wrong with painting? What's wrong with owning something you can look at? You think you're better than us.

Wkrs:
Take back your word. Has it all been done? What's wrong with painting!

Lan:
Stop bloody whinging. I spent three years making this happen.

Lan: I am up here because it was my idea and it's my stuff. I am doing this. People can make of it what they want.

Mo: Please stop! Michael, please stop.

Lan: Mother? I asked you not to come.

Mo: These things are not just your things. They have other people in them. Even bag ladies have bags. You are better than that.

Lan: I'm working!

Mo: What happens in the end?

Lan: I'll be left with nothing.

Mo: For a while.

Lan: Everything will be gone.

Mo: For a while.

Lan: What do you want?

Mo: I want the coat.

Lan: You can't have it.

Mo: It's mine.

Lan: You gave it to me.

Mo: Give it back

Lan: Stop it mum.

Mo: *(to the workers)* Have you seen a sheepskin coat? Bring it to me there's a good boy.

Lan: Mother, stop it!

<p>Mo:</p> <p>Bring it to me it belongs to me. Up there everyone looking at you! Give me back the coat It's my coat. My husband died.</p>	<p>Lan:</p> <p>Get back to work. Don't listen to her. Get back to work. It was my father's coat.</p>
---	--

Wkrs: Why do you want it?

Mo: It was his fathers coat he loved it. Saved up every week for months, then bought it. I would slip my hands inside it and he would hold me.

Mo:
The smell of it!

Lan:
If you give her the coat you won't
get paid. Get back to work. I have
to destroy the coat.

Wkrs:
It was your
father's coat.
Look at her.
This isn't
right.

Mo: Before he was even thought of he loved that coat He wanted his little boy to have it when he grew up. He would bequeath it to him, a metaphor for my husband's struggle. We worked like galley slaves to give him a better life and this is what he does. Everything else I don't care A perfectly good car his paintings gifts his clothes I don't care I don't care but this coat, this coat, his father, my husband, a good man, shredded. He was shredded. You are shredding him again. Shredding a good man.

Lan: He said, "you know the right way, so don't do it the wrong way." A right way of painting the wall, a right way of sweeping the floor, of cooking the breakfast. There's a right way of doing this. I think you should leave. I don't think you should be here when I destroy the coat.

Mo: Come and see me in a few days. I'll cook you dinner.

FINALE ACT 2

MMP2: I'm back

BLV: This will really hurt in the morning.

OMPs: Someone should stop this.

MMP2: That is what you have in mind, isn't it?

Wkrs: Destroy the coat!

Mar: My mother was right.

Lan:
This is such a rush.

OMPs:
He has a gun, Oh God he has a gun.

Wkrs: Everything must go!

BLV: Anus aches, wet down my leg, diarrhoea dribble, toenails loose, heart aches. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, OW! (*becomes a genuine scream of agony*)

MMP2: It's what you want isn't it?

BLV
Boom, boom,
boom, boom,
boom, boom.

Lan:
This is such a
rush.

Wkrs:
We have
tabulated and
quantified.
Everything must
go.

OMPs:
He's mad. He's
goin' to use the
gun. Say stop
and he'll stop.

MMP2:
Say stop
and I'll
stop.

Mar:
My mother was
right.

Lan:
This is such a rush.

Wkrs:
Everything must
go!

OMPs:
He has a fucking
gun.

MMP2:
It's
what
you
want
isn't it?

MMP2: Yes, I place the bullet in the chamber and spin it. Where is the bullet? You want to find out?

OMPs: Stop him he's mad.

MMP2: I'm just following orders. She takes full responsibility. Don't you?

Mar: My mother was right.

*The OMPs rush to stop MMP2.
Blackout on Marina*

*Barry le Va collapses.
Blackout on le Va*

*Coat goes in the grinder. Landy raises his arms in triumph.
Blackout*

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

As the music plays, all of the spaces dissolve into a single space. Helpers put Barry le Va on a stretcher. All eyes are on the artists as the scene mutates into something with the feel of a court room.

BLV: My head hurts.

Chorus: What do you expect.

Mar: Did you see that?

Chorus: You said this would happen.

Mar: Did you see that. Did you? The gun? He loaded the gun. He did, didn't he? He loaded it?

Chorus: He did. He loaded it.

Mar: He did. I know guns. I heard the mechanism. Heard it chamber. Who was he? Did you see him? There were others. I should have known. Did I know? Did I say? Did I?

Chorus: You said this would happen. Now it has.

Mar: He looked right into my eyes. I saw him. I really saw him.

Chorus: You said this would happen. Now it has.

Mar: I nearly died. He could have done it.

Chorus: You said this would happen. Now it has.

Mar: I could feel you. I knew what you would do. I tried to reach you. Some of you were bright, others dark. He had nothing. He was a coward. A man would have shot me. After picking up the gun, putting it in my mouth. Is he dead now? Like Judas hanging in a tree. I had a crown of thorns. I was bathed in oils. Someone prayed. I heard praying.

Chorus: *(to all of the artists)* You have desecrated yourselves. No one will remember you for this. *(to Landy)* Did you get paid for this? Will you buy more stuff? No one will say your name, so what does it mean?

Lan: I don't know yet. I know I'm sad.

Mar: I'm not sad. I'm ecstatic. I survived.

Lan: I still know who I am. I still know what I have.

Chorus: No one will remember you. No one will say your name. It will not be written.

Lan: Is someone with nothing an affront to you? I don't understand your rancour.

Chorus: A list of things to destroy is as old as history.

Mar: Exult, rejoice!

Chorus: You foist your neurosis on the world. For what?

Mar:
Cease your carping!

Chorus:
For what?

BLV: *(shouting)* Quiet! Stop. Stop everything. *(Le Va struggles slowly to his knees, watched by everyone)* Can we just be here....for a while. Just breathing

BLV:
People will watch this, moment by moment.
Galaxies slowing down, coming to rest. They will
watch this, but there is nothing to see.

CTs:
Lift up your arms. This will salve
you. Sorry if this hurts. Would
you like something for the pain.

OCs: Stop that. He did this to himself. Let him look to his own care.

CTs: Would you like something for the pain.

OCs: Let him look to his own care.

Mar:
I'm ecstatic. I survived.
I'm still here.

Lan:
We don't know now
what we know.

BLV:
We don't know now
what we know. I'm
bleeding quite a lot.

OCs:
He did
this to
himself.
Let him
look to
his own
care.

Mar, Lan, BLV: You have had your say. Let it rest.

Mar, Lan, BLV, CTs: Let it rest.

*They all start to help the three performers
Joseph Beuys enters*

JB: It cannot rest. It is life. Breathing or not breathing. Being or not being. One is part of the other. It cannot rest.

Mar: More than that! It's what is between us. That's where we are. I am nothing here. Out there, waves of ideas radiating. I am reaching out.

JB: One is part of the other. It cannot rest.

BLV: Let it rest.

Lan: I have family. I have love.

W3: It's time to go.

Lan: They were only things.

Wkrs: It's time to go.

Lan: Only things.

MA, MFP1, Wkrs: It's time to go. It's time to go.

Mar: I don't want to leave. It's just a room, but it will define me.

Chorus: It's time, time to go.

Mar, Lan: I'm reaching out.

JB: It must not rest.

Mar, Lan, BLV: I'm reaching out.

Chorus: It's time to go.

JB: It cannot rest.

END OF OPERA

APPENDIX 3

How To Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare

1st Version

Appendix 3 contains the 1st version of the aria '*How To Explain Pictures To a Dead Hare*', composed in 2008. It is almost identical to the final version until bar 67 (p143). It contains a working of slide 4 which does not appear in the final version in any form.

John Breen

To A Dead Hare

Andrew Synnott

$\text{♩} = 72$

A pic-ture rep-re-sents some-thing in the world. We see some-thing in this world and we

try to re-cre-ate it with-in a frame. This frame is a rec-tangle It mea-sures eight feet by four feet

These are hu-man feet. your feet are smal-ler so it would ap-pear lar-ger to you

$\text{♩} = 55$

It was made by a man named Jack-son poll-ock from A-me-ri-ca

This is not like some of the oth-er

11

things ³1 will show ³ you. Some peo-ple think it is beau-ti-ful

13

They'll pay a lot of mō-ney for it Mon-ey is con-cen-tra-ted time. ⁸⁷

17

did you have a wife? Can a

21

hare have a bro-ken heart? In some

25

field does some-one grieve_____ you?____

29

Will your be-lo - ved run a-mok through a mea-dow rent-ing her fur with her paws?Or

32

is she bun-dled up in her set wee - ping? This is a pic-ture of an im-a-gin-ar-y wo-man She is floa-ting in a stream

36

She holds flo-wers in her hand When I look at the paint-ing I feel she is beau³ti-ful for a hu-man

sub p

39 Moving

She is in grave dan-ger close to

42

death the wa-ter's a snare that will

47

molto rit.**A tempo slower**

smo-ther her. No no don't be up-set She's o-bli-vious to her fate

53

tempo 1

she is not real She will float in her mad-ness.

59

poco rit a tempo

long af-ter you and I are dust

64 **poco rit** **a tempo**

69 this is a pic-ture of a man wear-ing beau-ti-ful gar-ments. When

73 this man walked his gar-ments would float in the air. They would make a beau-ti-ful

76 sound The light would shim-mer on them as they

79 moved He would look beau-ti-ful to all who looked up-on him

82 *rit.*

H does not wear these clothes to attract a mate it is warning to the other males that he_

86 *a tempo*

is in charge.

91 *♩=123 moving on*

This picture is called birth-day

97

it is not clear whose birth-day it is the

APPENDIX 4

Act 1, scene 1 insert

MARINA ENTERS WITH A FEMALE
PHOTOGRAPHER/ASSISTANT

PHOTOGRAPHER

Do you want me to photograph the objects.

MARINA

You can photograph them when i have them laid out.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Where did you get them.

MARINA

I bought them.

PHOTOGRAPHER

So they are not..

MARINA

Special.. No. They are just things I bought. They have no meaning outside of this room.

PHOTOGRAPHER

(holding a blade)

You want them to hurt you.

MARINA

I want to give them the opportunity.
I want them to make the choice.
I want to know what it is like to have them hurt me.
I want to shock them, to create a new space in them.
I want that space to be filled with something new.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Do you want me to photograph that?
People hurting you.

MARINA

I want you to record what happens.
Just that. Don't interpret. Don't use clever angles.
Your photographs should be mundane compositions.

PHOTOGRAPHER

How long will it take?

MARINA

How long?

PHOTOGRAPHER

How will I know when it's over?

MARINA

You'll know.
We don't change .
I found my diary.
Same shit now.
Same pain.
Same fear.

I am a woman.
 But i am afraid of my mother.
 I still cry at night over nothing.
 Imagined slights, smallness.
 Who am I if not a daughter, lover, mother?
 I long for some stillness.

My mother tried to kill me.
 Someone rang her at home and said that
 I was hanging naked from the ceiling at the gallery.
 She said I give you life and now I take it from you.
 She threw a heavy crystal ashtray at my head.
 I moved my head: but it occurred to me that I didn't have
 to.
 That I could just let it smash my skull .
 That I could allow my mother and the ashtray to send me
 into oblivion.
 To see what it is like.
 But how to come back?
 So I moved my head.

Marina has finished setting out the
 objects. The photographer takes a
 shot.

PHOTOGRAPHER

I don't understand.

MARINA

Something will happen.
 Something will happen to me.
 Something will happen to them, in them.
 A space will open up.
 Sometimes it needs a great loss.
 A thunderbolt from the Gods to open up this kind of space.
 Sometimes it needs something to lift the skin, the veil, to
 peer behind.

They will mock me. They will hurt me. They will cut me.
 I will be there for all of this. I will be with them.
 I will understand their actions even as they don't.
 I will try to love them even as I am not loved.
 I will try to heal them even as i am not healed.
 I will feel for them even as they don't feel for me.

PHOTOGRAPHER

What about the gun?

MARINA

They won't use the gun.

PHOTOGRAPHER

And the bullet?

MARINA

Of what use is a gun without a bullet?

PHOTOGRAPHER

You seem so normal.

MARINA

I am as mad as a bag of cats.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Why not leave the bullet? Someone could get hurt.
Not just you, a member of the public.

MARINA

What are you suggesting?

PHOTOGRAPHER

It's dangerous.

MARINA

Yes. It's dangerous. Very dangerous.
But it needs to be dangerous.
Without that danger will I be present?
Will they? I want their attention.
I want them to experience what happens.
I need to be there, not in my head, not in my memory or in
the future.
A loaded gun has the power to focus ones mind wonderfully.
You will watch what happens and pity me.
My life is pitiful. Why else would I do such things?
My whole life is merely a series of questions without
answers.
Questions no one else is asking.
I long to be so old that I no longer care about anything.
JUST THE NEXT BREATH. AND THE BREATH AFTER THAT.
NOT TO CARE ABOUT MY BIG NOSE OR MY CRAZY PARENTS OR MY
LOVER OR MONEY OR TIME OR THIS.

APPENDIX 5

Second draft of act 3

ACT 3

EPILOGUE

Michael Landy and Marina see each other for the first time.

All the other individuals onstage become aware of the change in time/space. They workers see marina's audience. They are bashful with one another.

They all become a chorus

Barry le Va struggles to his feet.

His recording of him bashing in to the walls is the only sound.

The chorus is anxious to hear what he says

BARRY LE VA

My head hurts!

CHORUS

What did you expect?

MARINA

Did you see that? Did you? Did you see that? The gun? He loaded the gun. He did . Didn't he? He loaded it?

CHORUS

He did.
He loaded it.

MARINA

He did. I know guns. I heard the mechanism. Heard it chamber. Who was he? Did you see him? There were others. I should have known. I should have. I knew. I think I knew. Did I know? Did I? Did I say?

CHORUS

You said.
You said this would happen.
Now it has.

Marina takes a drink

MARINA

Yes. MMMMM, this is great, is there more?

MARINA (CONT'D)

I was here. The whole time. Not for a second. Present. I was present. I heard everything. Jesus. Aagghhhh. He looked right into my eyes. I saw him. Really saw him. He couldn't see me. I nearly died. I nearly died. I thought he could do it. He could do it. He could do it. I was waiting. Like that photo. In sixty eight. The prisoner. Grimacing. I heard the bullet chamber. Do you know the photo? The man like this? The gun at his head. Waiting. Waiting for the shock. The blast. Waiting for oblivion. Impact. Who stopped it?

CHORUS

It just stopped. We stopped it. We saved you and now you despise us. You showed us! Well done! You showed us. Thank you! We are grateful. We are base, and we didn't know. Imagine that! We are in your debt. You held a mirror up to our nature. How can we repay you oh great one. We should fall on our knees and wash your feet.

MARINA

I could feel you. When you came in. I knew what you would do. I tried to reach you. Some of you were bright. Others dark. He had nothing. He was a coward. A man would have shot me. After picking up the gun. Putting it in my mouth? What have you done with him? Maybe he's dead now. Like Judas hanging from a tree. I had a crown of thorns. I was bathed in oils. You got it. You understood. Someone prayed. I heard praying. I'm hungry. There are sandwiches? Sweet meats? I want champagne.

MARINA (CONT'D)

The bastards. The bastards. Was it just the men? No. Something on my back.

She cut me.

She wasn't the only one. Bitches. Bitches. Barbarians. The sphinx's nose. The library at Alexandria. Desecration comes naturally to them.

CHORUS

You have desecrated your selves!
If you want grief and blood and guts, go to a bullfight.
You foist your neurosis on the world for what?
To tell us something we already know.

MICHAEL LANDY

We didn't know it.
Any of it.
We don't know now what we know.

CHORUS

Did you get paid for this?
Yes!
Will you buy more stuff?
Yes!
So what does it mean?

MICHAEL LANDY

I don't know yet.
I know I'm sad.
I know why.
I still know who I am.
I still know what I have.

CHORUS

No one will remember you.
For this?
No one will say your name.
It will not be written!
Anyone could do this.
A bunch of thugs with sledgehammers could have done this.
A B52 could have done this.
A list of things to destroy is as old as history.

MARINA

I'm not sad!
I am ecstatic.
(MORE)

MARINA (CONT'D)

I survived, I won. You can
desecrate my body or flay me alive.
I'm still here.

BARRY LE VA

Ahhh.

CHORUS

He needs an ambulance

BARRY LE VA

Shh. Be quiet. Stop. Just stop
everything. can we just be here for
a while. All of us. Just breathing.
Can we do that? All of us. Please?

CHORUS

More contempt!
You impose this on the world and
now you want our silence?

BARRY LE VA

Please. I don't want to argue.
This is a private moment.
I don't want to share it.
I don't want to be on display.
Even prostitutes need somewhere
private they can go to.
Somewhere safe. Away from fingers
and eyes and mouths. If you have to
be here can you please be quiet.
For a few moments. Let me gather
myself. I'm bleeding quite a lot.

Some of the chorus go and tend his wounds.

CHORUS TENDERS

Lift up your arms.
This will salve you.
Sorry if this hurts.
Can we cut your shirt.
Would you like something for pain?

CHORUS

Stop that. He did this to himself.
Let him look to his own care.
You did this for us is that it?
We should be grateful, admiring.
You mock us and ask us for money.
You are the new prophets.
So what is your prophesy?
What should we do Oh lords?

(MORE)

CHORUS (CONT'D)

How should we atone to you for our
sins.

MICHAEL LANDY

I have asked a question how you
answer it is up to you.
I am naked and you are shouting at
me.
I don't understand your rancor.
Is someone with nothing an affront
to you?
Well then rage at the world.
Rage at the dead.
Why attack the defenceless?
To be sure of victory?
My work is a letter sent into the
night.
I don't know who receives it or
what their response will be.
It won't change anything.
So don't waste your breath on me.

CHORUS TENDERS

Is there someone here for you?

BARRY LE VA

(referring to recording)

Can you hear it?
It is a sculpture.
People will watch it.
They will feel and imagine.
The energy draining from a moving
object.
Draining from me.
Life draining away
Moment by moment.
Galaxies slowing down.
Everything eventually stops.
Comes to rest.
They will watch this.
But there is nothing to see.

MARINA

Exult! Rejoice!
Cease this carping!
It is done.
You have had your say.
Let it rest.
This means something or it means
nothing.
It is not for us to say.

JOESEPH BEUYS

It cannot rest.
It is life.
Breathing and not breathing.
Being or not being.
One is not part of the other.
It cannot rest.
If it rests it is not.
I am not.
What am I if not this?
(repeat)

MARINA

More than that. More than that.
We are bags of bones and viscera.
It's what is between us.
That's where we are.
I am nothing. Here.
Out there! Waves of ideas radiating.
I'm reaching out. Reaching out.

BARRY LE VA

(he is talking about the
recording of him crashing into
the walls)

Listen! Do you hear that?
Organic and inorganic matter colliding and blending.
Grace in chaos. Beauty in a ripple. What beauty is contained
within me now.? Shock-waves radiate through my body.
Through my bones.
Radiating -out through my skin into the world.
Into the evening traffic.

MARTIN LANDY

Everything I have is gone. Except me. Except me and them. And
them. Should I disown my friends and family. Alienate and
disgust people so they will disown me. Or write to them. Give
them a list of their faults and flaws. Dig deep to wound
them. Then go into the world naked and alone. Friendless
faithless orphaned wretched. Or dead. A thin line between art
and insanity. I'm an artifact now. I'm un-tethered I'm the
corollary of capitalism. My revolution is over
I must govern my life as best I can.

MARINA

Where am I in this?
My mother thinks I'm mad.
I am a grown woman
Standing in front of the world
To her I am an errant child.
A fool.
Mother sees danger in every room
In every breath.
Mother lays over me to catch the blow.
Mother salves my broken heart
Mother bandages my wounds
Mother strains against the pain.
Holding me inside her.
Mother lived on nuts and berries
Mother could kill with her bare hands.
Mother lays down the law.
Law I obey.
Mother scoffs. Nods. Complains.
Mother is my public.
Mother does not understand.
Mother says I am making a show of myself.
I am making a show of my self.
I am a show.
A holy show.